

***Aiding Digital Diploma
Supplement Usage and
Promotion – ADDS UP!***

This guidance document is intended to assist Higher Education Institutions to achieve the aim of issuing the Diploma Supplement in accordance with the recommendations: that it be issued automatically, free of charge, and digitally.

The guidance has been developed as part of the ADDS UP project, an Erasmus+ project aimed at supplying guidance for HEIs on issuing digital Diploma Supplements. More information on the project is available at the end of this document. As part of the project, the ADDS UP project team conducted a survey of HEIs regarding their use of the Diploma Supplement. The majority of respondents issue the Diploma Supplement and do so automatically, but less than a third issue it as a digital document. Of that 31%, only 16% use a dedicated digital credential platform.

How are HEIs using the Diploma Supplement currently?

- 84% of ADDS UP survey respondents stated they issue the Diploma Supplement
- 78% of those issuing the Diploma Supplement issue it automatically
- Only 31% issue the Diploma Supplement digitally

What methods are used by those issuing the Diploma Supplement digitally?

- 41% - PDF
- 32% - Secure PDF
- 16% - Online digital credentials platform
- 6% - Institution's own student records system
- 4% - Some other system

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What is the Diploma Supplement?

The Diploma Supplement is a standardised document that is given to graduates of higher education programmes. It provides information on the student's individual attainments, including course credits, grades, and what has been achieved.

The Diploma Supplement contains data confirming the name of the awarding body, the type and reference level of qualification awarded, and the content of the course and results attained. It was developed by the Council of Europe, European Commission and UNESCO, and an updated version was adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee in 2007, and again in 2019.¹

The Diploma Supplement, which is also part of the Europass suite of transparency tools, can be issued by higher education institutions responsible for issuing higher education, although it should be noted that some countries have more specific regulations (you should check with your national Europass Centre or ENIC/NARIC if you are unsure about these regulations). The Diploma Supplement is issued across the 48 countries participating in the Bologna Process (members of the European Higher Education Area).

What guidance is there on issuing the Diploma Supplement?

For an issuing institution to provide the Diploma Supplement, it is strongly recommended that supplements should conform with the following guidelines as jointly developed and published by the Council of Europe, European Commission and UNESCO:

- Issuers should follow the structure and order of information as provided in the annexed template.
- Keep the document concise by only including necessary information specific to the programme of studies attained.
- Production should be done centrally - not delegated to different parts of same parent academic institution (for consistency)
- The issuers should take suitable precautions to minimise the possibility of forgery and misrepresentation of their Diploma Supplements.
- General information on the higher education system should be kept to a two-page maximum. Reference to the national qualification framework should be made. This information could be produced for each country with the help of national ENICs/NARICs (national information centres). It is particularly important that the Diploma Supplement clearly describes the national higher education structure (section 8 of the annex) in force at the time the qualification's award.
- The Diploma Supplement should be supplied automatically at the time the qualification is completed, free of charge and in a widely spoken language.

More information is available at https://europa.eu/europass/system/files/2020-06/Diploma%20Supplement_Instructions.pdf

¹ https://europa.eu/europass/system/files/2020-06/Diploma%20Supplement_Instructions.pdf

What are digital credentials?

Digital credentials are **certifications or certificates** such as diplomas and transcripts, issued by a given institution, which:

- Are issued as a digital version of the traditional documents
- Provide information about the academic learning of the holder, just like traditional certificates, with the added benefits offered by digitalisation
- Include information and metadata, and should also include a digital signature or e-seal

What are European Digital Credentials for Learning?

- European Digital Credentials for Learning are digital credentials which provide information on a person's work or study details in Europe
- European Digital Credentials for Learning can include details of:
 - qualifications (e.g. university diplomas and other learning achievements, professional qualifications)
 - activities
 - assessments
 - entitlements (e.g. rights to access a profession or a higher level of education)

European Digital Credentials for Learning have the same legal validity as paper-based credentials and are recognised throughout the European Education Area.

A European Digital Credential for Learning contains information about **Metadata**, **Issuer**, **Subject**, and **e-Seal**.

More information can be found at <https://europa.eu/europass/en/european-digital-credentials-learning>

What are the benefits of using a digital Diploma Supplement?

A digital Diploma Supplement is more secure than a physical or paper document. A digital document is extremely difficult to amend or forge, unlike a paper document. It is also easier to issue and share once the system is installed (a "one click" solution) and easier to issue automatically (one of the aims for issuing the Diploma Supplement) as the system can be set to issue the supplement once the student completes their course. This means no more manual updating and issuing of supplements!

Benefit to learners include:

- Can be held securely and digitally, unlike a paper copy which can easily be lost or damaged
- Can be shared with institutions for future academic studies as needed, without having to make copies or scans and send them
- The learner knows that the institution will trust the security of the document and that it is genuine and can be verified.

Benefits to educational institutions include:

- Many aspects can be automated including issuing the Diploma Supplement and verifying its validity for external stakeholders, reducing the administrative burden of issuing the document
- A digitally signed version of the Diploma Supplement is highly secure and difficult to forge
- The Diploma Supplement could be revoked if necessary

Benefits for employment include:

- Employers can verify the validity securely and can be sure the document has not been tampered with
- A digital Diploma Supplement can be easily sent to employers or attached to online job applications
- The details support a clear assessment of the candidate's skills and competences

How to get started issuing digital Diploma Supplements

What resources are required to be able to issue Diploma Supplement as digitally signed credentials?

The resources required depend greatly on what the HEI needs and wants to have. It is not possible to determine an average cost, as it depends heavily on the institution and the solutions they require. There is also no right or wrong way to build your digital credentials solution.

With that in mind, what is the best place to start? Here are some tips on what things to take into consideration when working out an estimate on required resources.

1. Find out what are your needs: volume (how many credentials); how customized your solution needs to be (can you use an off-the-shelf solution vs. a customized solution? How much would the off-the-shelf solution need to be modified for your needs and how complex would your customized solution be?); possible legislative needs; the costs of the electronic/digital signature solution for your institution
2. Discuss, share experiences and learn from others - what digital solutions have other institutions adopted? Contact potential providers to have talks or workshops to find out your needs and how the provider could meet them, and at what cost
3. Start with one programme or discipline and expand from there; use your experiences to build up your understanding of what resources you need

Using the European Digital Credentials for Learning solution

Similar to any digital credential solution, the costs varies depending on the implementer's approach, i.e. the volume and complexity of credentials they wish to issue (including whether or not they want to customise the credentials' look and feel) and the method they choose to issue credentials.

For example: a low-cost option uses the European Commission's free service and platform, while a more costly option runs the system locally and is customised.

The institution will need to determine which solution works best for their needs. For more information on the EDC, you can be in touch with the EDC support team directly at edcsupport@ext-ec-europa.eu.

More about electronic signatures and e-seals

For digital issuance of credentials, it is primarily necessary to provide an e-seal from the appropriate institution. The costs of a qualified electronic seal can vary from country to country.

An electronic seal is data in electronic form, which is attached to or logically associated with other data in electronic form to ensure the latter's origin and integrity, where the creator of a seal is a legal person (unlike the electronic signature that is issued by a natural person). Electronic seals might serve as evidence that an electronic document was issued by a legal person, ensuring certainty of the document's origin and integrity.

The Member States of the European Union and European Economic Area publish trusted lists of qualified trust service providers in accordance with the eIDAS Regulation: EU Trust Services Dashboard (europa.eu). This is where you should start to look for opportunities for your organisation.

How can my institution implement the European Digital Credentials for Learning?

The EDC provides organisations with a possibility to issue credentials as well as develop their own applications using the European Digital Credentials for Learning infrastructure; this infrastructure comprises the core building blocks to help operationalise the framework: eIDAS, standards, services and software.

For more information on the EDC, you can get in touch with the EDC support team directly at edcsupport@ext-ec-europa.eu.

How can we issue the Diploma Supplement using the European Digital Credentials for Learning?

European Digital Credentials for Learning can be used to issue the Diploma Supplement. Institutions can register if they obtain the e-seal and follow the steps previously outlined.

Diploma Supplement

Work in progress

www.europass.eu

View Credential

[Credential Details](#) [Export](#) [Upload another credential](#) [Share](#) English

EUROPASS DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT

This Diploma Supplement model was developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and Unesco/CEPES. The purpose of the supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to improve the international 'transparency' and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc.).

1. HOLDER OF THE QUALIFICATION

1.1 Family name	1.2 First name
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
1.3 Date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY)	1.4 Student ID number or code
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

2. ISSUING ORGANISATION

2.1 Name of institution	2.2 Country
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2.3 Address	
<input type="text"/>	

What next?

If you have questions regarding this guidance, please email the ADDS UP project team at e4@ecctis.com or fill in the contact form on the project webpage.

You can email the EDC team at edcsupport@ext-ec-europa.eu

And finally, please share this guidance with colleagues to open the discussion about issuing the Diploma Supplement digitally.

About ADDS UP

Aiding Digital Diploma Supplement Usage and Promotion (ADDS UP) aims to improve the use of the Diploma Supplement; in particular, supporting higher education institutions to issue the document automatically, digitally, free of charge and in a major European language to every graduate.

The project has sought to identify and take stock of current practices regarding the Diploma Supplement in each partner country, allowing for the sharing of best practices and a peer review process. The key outputs of the project are guidance and online training material to facilitate digitalisation of the Diploma Supplement process by HEIs.

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ADDS UP has been implemented by:

- [UK ENIC, ECCTIS Limited](#)
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- [Malta Further and Higher Education Authority \(MFHEA\)](#) (MQRIC, NARIC Malta)
- [Quality and Qualifications Ireland \(QQI\)](#) (NARIC and National Europass Centre, Ireland)

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