PRODUCT REQUIREMENTS DOCUMENT

Expert-Verified Creator Badge

YouTube Learning Experience – Trust & Credibility Initiative

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1. Document Overview

Title / Initiative	Expert-Verified Creator Badge for YouTube Learning
Date & Version	February 22, 2026 | v1.0
Product POC	Mehul Mitkari (C49)
Design POC	YouTube Learning UX Team
Tech POC	YouTube Trust & Safety Engineering
Marketing POC	YouTube Creator Partnerships

2. Why? (Objective)

2.1 For Business

YouTube is the default learning entry point for hundreds of millions of users globally. However, engagement-optimized ranking (views, watch time) does not adequately surface content reliability. Over 40% of frequent learners in our research explicitly cited difficulty identifying trustworthy content as their top frustration. This trust gap directly erodes 30-day retention among the learning segment – a high-value cohort that drives both ad revenue and Premium subscriptions. Introducing a credibility layer addresses this retention leak at its root, protecting YouTube's position against structured competitors like Coursera, Khan Academy, and Skillshare.

2.2 For Users

Frequent learners on YouTube spend 5–15 minutes (and sometimes over an hour) just finding a video they trust before learning even begins. They rely on proxy signals – view count, thumbnail quality, channel size – none of which indicate subject-matter expertise. This leads to excessive video-switching, fragmented sessions, and declining confidence in using YouTube for repeated learning. The Expert-Verified Creator Badge gives learners a clear, domain-specific trust signal at the point of decision, reducing cognitive overhead and letting them focus on what they came for: learning.

3. How Do We Measure Success?

3.1 Associated OKR / Goal

Improve 30-day retention by 15% in 6 months for users who use YouTube for learning at least weekly.

3.2 Success Metrics

Type	Metric Name	Definition	Why It Matters
Key Metric	Learning Session Completion Rate	% of users who watch 80%+ of a video selected with a verified badge	Directly measures whether users select more appropriate and trustworthy content
Secondary	Video Switching Rate	Avg. videos opened before completing one learning session	Lower switching = reduced trial-and-error and improved upfront trust
Secondary	Repeat Learning Rate (30-day)	% of users returning for another learning session within 30 days	Captures long-term retention improvement among serious learners
Guardrail	Creator Exposure Diversity	Distribution of views across creators after badge launch	Ensures trust signals do not unfairly suppress new or smaller creators

3.3 Guardrail / Do-Not-Disturb Metrics

Creator Exposure Diversity must not degrade. If verified-badge videos capture more than 70% of impressions in any learning category, the algorithm weighting will be recalibrated. Additionally, overall platform watch time should not decline; this initiative should be additive to engagement, not a trade-off.

4. Who Are the Users?

4.1 Personas

Persona 1: Rishit – The Exam-Driven Student

20-year-old graduate master's student. Uses YouTube daily for exam prep. Searches manually, picks high-view-count videos, switches frequently, and stitches information across 3–5 videos per topic. His core frustration: he can never be sure whether what he's watching is correct and exam-relevant. Quote: "I just want to be sure what I'm learning is correct and complete."

Persona 2: Isha – The Working Professional

26-year-old founding Product Manager. Uses YouTube several times a week to learn tools, frameworks, and strategies to improve at work. She follows recommendations, but frequently abandons videos that don't match her expected depth or applicability. Quote: "I don't mind learning. I just don't want to waste time on the wrong content."

4.2 Problems We Are Solving

User Problem	Behavioral Outcome	Business Impact	Primary Metric
Cannot identify trustworthy content	Video switching, hesitation	Reduced confidence in repeated use	Retention
Fragmented tutorials	Topic abandonment	Lower long-term reliance	Retention
High time spent searching	Friction before value	Lower session satisfaction	Activation + Retention
Misaligned recommendations	Random next steps	Drop-offs in learning flow	Engagement + Retention

4.3 How Do We Know These Problems Exist? (Research)

User Interviews (Phase 2)

Structured 20–30 minute interviews with frequent YouTube learners (weekly+). Behavior-based screener: "Have you used YouTube to learn a new topic or skill in the past month?" Interviews followed a context → behavioral probing → pain probing → closing structure.

Survey Data (Phase 2)

Quantitative survey conducted after interviews to validate patterns at scale. Key findings: ~80% use YouTube daily or several times a week for learning. Nearly 100% use manual search. 70%+ follow trusted channels as a proxy for quality. 40%+ cite difficulty knowing which content to trust

as their top frustration. 50%+ spend 5–15 minutes just finding the right video. Open-ended responses repeatedly mentioned the need for credibility ranking, curated playlists, and concern over outdated or biased content.

PIF Prioritization (Phase 2)

Problems were scored on Population, Intensity, and Frequency (1–5 scale). “Hard to identify trustworthy content” scored 15/15 – the highest across all problems – confirming it as the P0 problem.

Problem	Population	Intensity	Frequency	Total PIF
Hard to identify trustworthy content	**5**	**5**	**5**	**15**
Fragmented tutorials	4	4	4	12
High time spent finding video	4	3	5	12
Misaligned recommendations	4	3	4	11
Depth mismatch	3	4	4	11
Lack of accountability	3	4	3	10

Key Insight

The problem is not content availability. The problem is confidence and structure. Users spend significant cognitive effort validating credibility and manually constructing learning paths. Over time, this erodes trust and reduces repeated reliance on YouTube for learning.

5. Solution

5.1 Brief of the Solution

Introduce an Expert-Verified Creator Badge – a domain-specific credibility indicator displayed on videos, search results, and channel pages. Creators submit verifiable credentials (academic degrees, professional certifications, institutional affiliations) through YouTube Studio. After verification (AI-assisted + human review), their videos within the verified domain display a visible badge. Learners see this badge at the point of decision (search results, recommendations, watch page), enabling faster, more confident content selection.

Think of it like the blue checkmark on Twitter/X, but instead of verifying identity, it verifies expertise. A cardiologist gets a badge on their heart health videos, not on their cooking vlogs. It's domain-scoped trust, not blanket celebrity validation.

5.2 Alternatives Considered (ICE Prioritization)

Six solutions were brainstormed against the three root causes identified in Phase 3. Each was scored on Impact (1–3), Confidence (1–3), and Effort (1–3) using the ICE formula: Impact × Confidence / Effort.

Solution	Impact	Confidence	Effort	ICE Score	Notes
Expert-Verified Creator Badge	3	3	1	9.0	High trust signal, low-moderate effort. Top priority.
AI-Summarized Comment Consensus	2	3	1	6.0	Quick win leveraging existing comment data.
Post-Video Outcome Feedback	2	2	1	4.0	Easy to build but cold-start risk for new videos.
Learning Intent Match Score	3	2	2	3.0	Strong filtering but requires NLP infrastructure.
AI Content Verifier + Sources	3	2	3	2.0	High impact but technically complex.
Multi-Video Learning Synthesis	3	1	3	1.0	Moonshot: transformative but very high effort.

The Expert-Verified Creator Badge (ICE: 9.0) emerged as the clear P0 solution due to its high trust impact, strong user-research backing, and manageable implementation scope. AI-Summarized Comment Consensus (ICE: 6.0) is recommended as a fast-follow P1.

6. Product Flow

6.1 Customer Journey

Expert-Verified Creator Badge: User Flow

The wireframes below illustrate a 6-screen mobile flow for the Expert-Verified Creator Badge, designed from the learner's perspective. The journey maps the complete experience from search intent to verified engagement and retention:

Screen 1 – Entry (User Intent): User opens YouTube and searches for a learning topic (e.g., "Thermodynamics First Law"). The current state shows standard results with no credibility signals.

Screen 2 – Search Results (Problem State): Results appear ranked by engagement metrics. Popularity indicators (view count, likes) do not signal subject-matter expertise, creating uncertainty and trial-and-error.

Screen 3 – Search Results with Expert-Verified Badge (Feature Introduced): Domain-specific verification badges appear on eligible videos. Learners can visually distinguish credentialed content at a glance – reducing the decision burden before clicking.

Screen 4 – Hover/Tap Interaction on Badge: Tapping or hovering on the badge reveals verification details: credential type, institution, verified domain, and verification date. This transparency builds trust before the user invests viewing time.

Screen 5 – Video Watch Page: The full watch page includes the badge alongside the creator's name. A note indicates if the video is part of a verified learning series. Trust is reinforced during consumption.

Screen 6 – Outcome (Engagement & Retention Loop): The verified structure increases completion rates, encourages repeat learning sessions, and drives the user toward curated series and playlists from the verified creator.

AI-Summarized Comment Consensus: User Flow

The second wireframe set illustrates the P1 solution across 6 screens:

Screen 1 – Entry (Search Intent): Identical entry point with learning-focused search.

Screen 2 – Search Results (Problem State): Views and likes do not guarantee accuracy or depth. Users may waste time clicking multiple videos.

Screen 3 – Search Results with AI Comment Consensus (Feature Introduced): Each result now shows a condensed community insight panel: strengths, weaknesses, and a Learning Value Score derived from structured comment analysis.

Screen 4 – Video Page (Before Watching): The AI summary is prominently displayed, allowing users to evaluate quality before investing 20+ minutes.

Screen 5 – Post-Video Completion: A structured feedback prompt strengthens the Learning Value Score and feeds the community trust loop.

Screen 6 – Outcome (Retention Loop): Confident learning drives repeat visits, playlist engagement, and sustained retention.

Note: All wireframes were created independently by Mehul Mitkari and are included in the Phase 3 deliverable. Figma was the initial tool; Nano Banana Pro was used for final image generation due to export issues.

6.2 User Stories & Acceptance Criteria

ID	User Story	Acceptance Criteria	Priority
US-01	As a learner, I want to see a visible Expert Verified badge on search results so that I can quickly identify credible content before clicking.	Badge is visible on thumbnail/title area in search results and recommendations. Badge shows domain (e.g., Physics, Finance). Hover/tap shows verification details.	P0
US-02	As a learner, I want to view a creator's verified credentials on their channel page so that I can assess their authority in a domain.	Channel page shows verified domains with credential details. Verification date and issuing body are visible. Links to original credential source where possible.	P0
US-03	As a creator, I want to submit my domain credentials for verification so that my content receives a trust badge.	Creator Studio has a Verification section. Supports upload of certificates, LinkedIn profiles, institutional affiliations. Status tracking: Pending, Verified, Rejected.	P0
US-04	As a learner, I want to see a post-video feedback prompt asking if the video answered my question, so that I contribute to community learning signals.	After 80%+ watch, a non-intrusive prompt appears. Options: Completely, Partially, Not at all. Results feed into Learning Value Score.	P1
US-05	As a learner, I want to filter search results to show only Expert Verified content, so that I save time when studying.	A toggle/filter chip in search labeled Expert Verified. Filter persists within session. Works on mobile and desktop.	P1
US-06	As a YouTube admin, I want to review flagged credential submissions so that we maintain badge integrity.	Admin dashboard shows pending applications. AI pre-scores likelihood of authenticity. Manual override + escalation workflow.	P0

6.3 Edge Cases

Scenario	Expected Behavior	Rationale
Creator has credentials in one domain but posts in another	Badge only displays on videos matching verified domain tags. Cross-domain content shows no badge.	Prevents misleading trust signals on out-of-scope content.
Creator's credentials expire (e.g., license renewal)	System flags expiring credentials 30 days before. Badge auto-hides if not renewed.	Maintains long-term badge integrity.
Video has multiple creators, only one verified	Badge shows with note: 'Partially verified – 1 of 2 creators.' Hover shows which creator.	Preserves transparency without blocking collaborations.
New video from a verified creator on a new topic	Badge does not auto-apply. Creator must tag the video with a verified domain for badge to show.	Ensures badge relevance per-video, not just per-channel.
User in a region where credential databases are unavailable	Allow alternative verification: peer endorsements, institutional email, published work.	Ensures global inclusivity in the verification pipeline.

6.4 Event Tracking Plan

Event Name	Trigger	Properties	Purpose
badge_impression	Expert badge shown in search/recommendations	video_id, creator_id, domain, surface (search/feed/watch)	Badge visibility and reach
badge_click	User taps/hovers on badge for details	video_id, creator_id, interaction_type (hover/tap)	User engagement with trust signals
verified_video_watch_start	User starts watching a verified-badge video	video_id, session_id, entry_point	Funnel: impression to watch
verified_video_completion	User watches 80%+ of verified video	video_id, watch_duration, completion_%	Key metric: learning session completion
post_video_feedback	User submits post-video learning feedback	video_id, response (complete/partial/not), time_to_respond	Learning Value Score input

badge_filter_toggle	User toggles Expert Verified filter in search	toggle_state (on/off), query, result_count	Filter adoption and usage
creator_verification_submit	Creator submits credential application	creator_id, domain, credential_type	Supply-side pipeline health
creator_verification_outcome	Verification decision rendered	creator_id, outcome (approved/rejected), review_time	Verification pipeline efficiency

7. Pitfalls & Mitigations

Every feature launch carries risk. The table below maps the key assumptions at risk, their failure modes, and the practical mitigations, detection signals, and rollback mechanisms.

Assumption	Failure Mode	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation	Detection	Rollback
Expert content may not be universally accurate	Users find contradictory info elsewhere	H	L	Auto-generated source links on videos	CTR on verified videos	Suspend badge; move to review queue
Creators game verification	Fake credentials submitted	H	M	Manual + AI review of credentials	Badge abuse reports	Revoke badge; flag for audit
Low creator adoption	Insufficient verified content	M	M	Seed with top edu creators; incentivize	Badge application rate	Expand to lighter verification tiers

8. Tentative Timelines

Estimated 20-week development cycle from approval to general availability, structured in phases:

Task	Timeline	Owner
Leadership & Stakeholder Approval	Week 1–2	Product, Engineering Lead, Legal
Design: Wireframes & Prototypes	Week 3–5	Design Team
Prototype User Testing (5–10 users)	Week 6–7	UX Research
Verification Backend Development	Week 5–10	Backend Engineering
Badge UI Development (Search, Watch, Channel)	Week 8–12	Frontend Engineering
Creator Studio Integration	Week 10–13	Creator Tools Team
Internal QA & Bug Fixes	Week 13–14	QA Engineering

Beta Launch (Top 500 Edu Creators)	Week 15	Product, Marketing, Ops
Monitor & Iterate (4-week beta)	Week 15–19	Product, Data Science
General Availability	Week 20	All Teams

9. Dependencies

Dependency	Details	Owner
Legal & Policy	Define credential verification standards; terms of service updates for badge misuse.	Legal, Policy Team
Trust & Safety	Build or integrate credential-checking APIs (e.g., LinkedIn, university databases).	T&S Engineering
Creator Relations	Outreach and onboarding for beta creator cohort; FAQ and support docs.	Creator Partnerships
ML/AI Infrastructure	Domain classification model for mapping videos to creator expertise.	ML Platform Team
Data Pipeline	Real-time badge eligibility computation and event logging infrastructure.	Data Engineering
Localization	Badge labels, verification flows, and UI in top 10 languages.	i18n Team

9.1 Open Questions

1. Should the badge be visible globally at launch, or initially scoped to specific learning categories (STEM, Finance, Health)?
2. What is the acceptable verification turnaround SLA for creators? (Proposal: 7 business days)
3. Will YouTube Premium users get early access to the Expert Verified filter?
4. How do we handle credential standards that vary by country (e.g., medical licensing across US, UK, India)?
5. What governance model will manage disputes when a creator's badge is revoked?

10. Related Documents

1. Assignment 1 Phase 1 – YouTube Product Analysis (Mehul Mitkari, C49)
2. Assignment 1 Phase 2 – User Research, SWOT, Goal Setting, Personas & P0 Prioritization
3. Assignment 1 Phase 3 – Solution Brainstorming, ICE Prioritization, Wireframes & Metrics
4. Tech Planning Document (to be created post-approval)
5. Design Planning Document (to be created post-approval)
6. Go-to-Market Plan (Creator onboarding + user awareness strategy)