D2L | Eduframe

The evolution of continuing education

From Fragmented to Frictionless: Building Continuing Education That Learners Can Return To

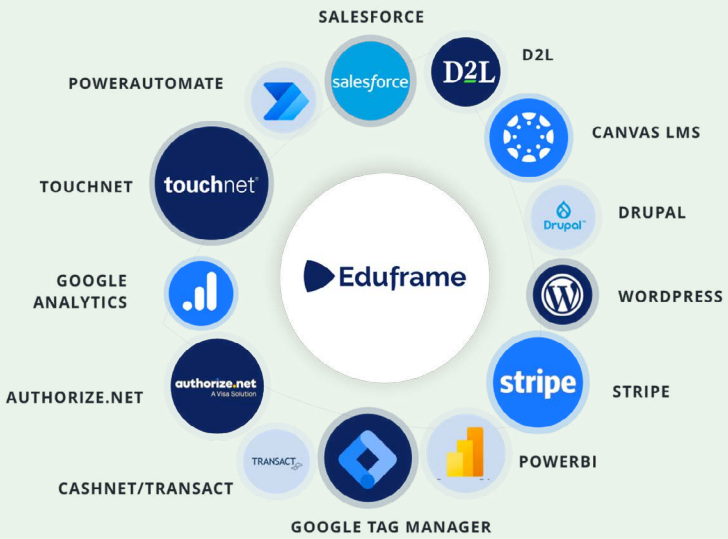


Continuing education asks institutions to think about learning over a longer period of someone's life. A person may take a course, apply what they have learned, and return when their work or interests change or evolve. Each experience needs to be worthwhile in its own right, while creating a relationship the learner wants to continue.

We see the evolution of continuing education in the decisions this requires. Institutions need to identify where they can offer distinctive value, involve corporate partners in understanding needs, and design smaller learning experiences that can lead somewhere meaningful. They also need an operating model that supports individual learners and sponsored groups without every new enrollment creating another series of manual tasks.

Fragmentation appears when those decisions are made separately. A relevant course may be difficult to find. Registration may work, while access to learning still depends on an email. A learner may complete a course without understanding how it connects to a next step. Staff often bridge these gaps themselves, making the experience look more connected than the underlying processes really are.

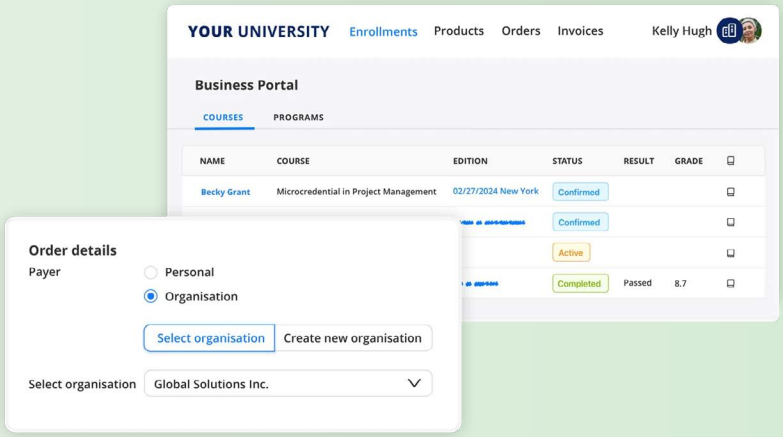
Moving from fragmented to frictionless means addressing those gaps across the institution. This is the opportunity behind bringing Eduframe and D2L Brightspace together: connecting the records and operations that support continuing education with the environment in which learning happens. The purpose is to create an experience people value and an institution they feel confident returning to.



The evolution of continuing education:	**85% of employers** plan to prioritize upskilling,[1] and **57% of U.S. adults** not in college have considered enrolling in a credential program[2]
Choose the value your institution can offer:	**$6M median annual revenue** for online and professional CE units.[3]
Build partnerships around a shared need:	**90% of higher education leaders** prioritize business partnerships.[4]
Understand the work before trying to scale it:	**39% of CE units** say time-to-market slows new programs.[5]

[1] WEF, Future of Jobs Report 2025, [2] Lumina Foundation-Gallup, State of Higher Education 2025, [3]UPCEA Staffing & Structure Survey, 2024, [4] Business-Higher Education Forum, 2025, [5] UPCEA, 2025.

> Clear communication and dependable access give learners confidence in the institution. Meaningful teaching, useful feedback, and opportunities to interact with others give them a reason to feel part of it.



GIVE LEARNERS A REASON TO CHOOSE YOU AGAIN

A learner's need for further education does not automatically mean they will return to the same institution. That choice also depends on how they felt during their previous experience. Did they feel supported? Was the learning relevant? Did the institution seem to understand what they needed and respect the time they had available?

A seamless experience can help build that connection. Clear communication and dependable access give learners confidence in the institution. Meaningful teaching, useful feedback, and opportunities to interact with others give them a reason to feel part of it. Together, these experiences can make the institution a familiar place to turn when another learning need arises.

Connection therefore deserves attention alongside convenience. An efficient registration process opens the door, while the experience throughout the course shapes what learners remember. Even a short online course can offer a sense of belonging when people know who is supporting them, have opportunities to contribute, and receive a response when they need help.

The purpose of the learning still matters. Someone taking a professional certificate may judge its value through workplace application. Another learner may value enjoyment, confidence, or connection with others. Ask people what they hoped to gain and whether the experience delivered it. Feedback about feeling supported and connected can help explain their willingness to recommend the institution or consider it again.

We would use D2L's research to place these conversations in a wider context, while recognizing that institutions serve different communities. A regional workforce provider and a university offering specialist professional education may need different approaches to building a lasting relationship.

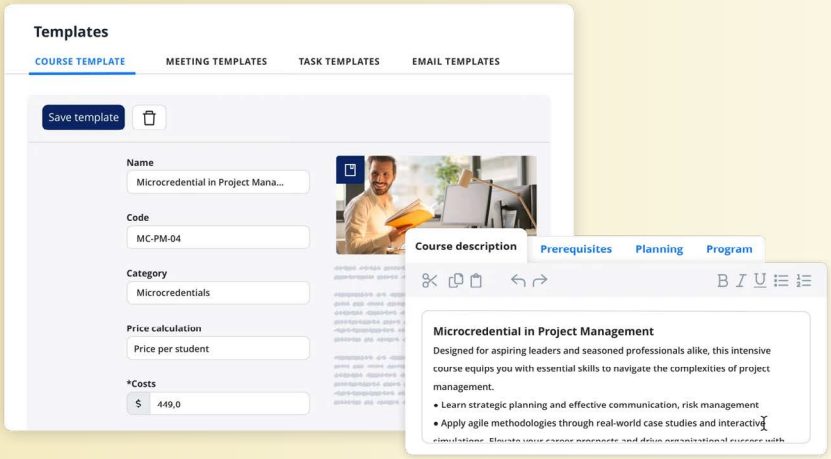
CHOOSE THE VALUE YOUR INSTITUTION CAN OFFER

Growing continuing education does not mean adding every course for which there might be demand. Each offering needs people to develop and teach it, a way to reach learners, and administrative support. It also makes a promise about the value someone can expect.

Start with the institution's strengths. Where do we have expertise that people cannot easily find elsewhere? Which communities or employers do we already understand? What can we deliver well within the capacity we have? These questions help connect market opportunity to a credible educational offer.

Once a program is running, evaluate completion, learner feedback, repeat participation, employer interest, delivery cost, and support demands together. High satisfaction among a small group may justify a specialist course. A popular course that creates extensive manual work may need a different operating model. Enrollment alone will not explain either situation.

Consider a specialist course with strong ratings but few returning learners. Perhaps the next course runs at an unsuitable time, or the pathway is difficult to understand. Perhaps the course meets a complete need, making repeat enrollment the wrong success measure. Conversations with learners and teaching teams help interpret the data and inform decisions about what to refine, expand, deliver with a partner, or discontinue.



> Course descriptions need to explain the learning outcomes, workload, prerequisites, and delivery format in terms people can use to make a decision.

BUILD PARTNERSHIPS AROUND A SHARED NEED

Employer engagement can help institutions understand what learning needs to achieve. An employer can describe a task people struggle with, the conditions in which a skill is used, and what competent performance would look like. Academic and learning teams can translate that need into suitable learning and assessment.

Begin the relationship early enough for that contribution to matter. Explore who needs support, what they already know, and what would change if the learning were successful. A request for a course may reveal a need for several shorter modules, a different schedule, or workplace support alongside formal learning.

Partners also extend beyond employers. Government agencies may connect institutions to a priority community or a funded initiative. Professional bodies may help establish expectations for practice. Other institutions, training providers, and community organizations may contribute expertise or reach that one organization cannot provide alone.

Each arrangement needs clear responsibilities for recruitment, eligibility, payment, support, and appropriate information sharing. In sponsored learning, the employer buying training and the person taking it have different needs. The employer may require an invoice and an agreed view of participation; the learner needs individual access and support. Where funding is involved, its conditions also need to be clear.

Eduframe's role in managing corporate relationships, sponsored enrollments, and the associated administrative records is relevant here. Connecting that information to learning delivery in Brightspace helps the institution coordinate the arrangement while keeping the learner's experience coherent.

MAKE LEARNING EASIER TO FIND AND ENTER

Imagine a learner looking for a short course while working full time. Before registering, they want to know whether it suits their experience, how much time it takes, what it costs, and what they will receive at the end. If their employer is paying, they also need to understand that arrangement.

We sometimes describe this discovery experience as wanting a Netflix of learning. The useful part of that comparison is finding something relevant, understanding the choice, and taking the next step easily. A large catalog alone will not achieve that. Course descriptions need to explain the learning outcomes, workload, prerequisites, and delivery format in terms people can use to make a decision.

Personalization can begin with straightforward choices. A returning learner should be able to find their existing record. Someone who completed an introductory module should understand whether it counts toward a larger program. A sponsored learner should receive instructions that match the arrangement their employer has made.

The transition into learning is especially important. After registering, people need a clear confirmation, an explanation of when and how they can begin, and a route to help. This is where the connection between Eduframe and Brightspace becomes visible to the learner: the administrative steps and the learning environment need to support one dependable start.

MAKE THE EXPERIENCE INSIDE THE LMS WORTH RETURNING FOR

Once learners enter the learning management system, the quality of the educational experience becomes central. They need to understand how the course is organized, what to do next, and how each activity contributes to their goal. Relevant content, useful feedback, and clear expectations help them judge whether their time is well spent. Flexible participation also needs thoughtful design so that learning can fit around other responsibilities without leaving people unsure of how to progress.

For D2L Brightspace, this means considering how the learning environment supports the teaching and relationships within it. A consistent course structure can reduce the effort of finding materials. Communication with instructors and, where appropriate, peers can help learners feel noticed and involved. Feedback should explain how they are doing and what they can improve. Institutions also need a way to identify when someone may need support and decide who should follow up. These choices shape whether the experience feels personal and supportive, including when learners participate at different times.

Accessibility needs attention both before and during the course. Finding information, registering, signing in, and using learning materials should all be considered. Offering a course online does not remove every barrier relating to time, language, confidence, or suitable technology.

The LMS experience contributes to the learner's relationship with the institution. When the course delivers on the expectations set before enrollment and people feel supported as they learn, the institution has a stronger basis for inviting them back. Eduframe and Brightspace have complementary roles in making that promise consistent across administration and learning delivery.

MAKE ACHIEVEMENT CREDIBLE AND LEARNING STACKABLE

Learners need to understand what their achievement represents and where it can take them. Credibility starts with clear learning outcomes, an appropriate assessment, and an identifiable institution standing behind the result. A certificate should make clear whether it recognizes attendance, completion, or assessed achievement.

Stackability gives smaller learning experiences a place within a larger pathway. Learners should know which courses count, how they combine, and what conditions apply. Institutions need to agree those relationships so that a next step is educationally meaningful and can be supported administratively.

Mobility concerns how learners use that achievement in another setting, such as a new role, an employer conversation, or further study. Clear records help people explain what they have learned, while recognition depends on the receiving organization. For Eduframe and Brightspace, the priority is a coherent relationship between the program structure, learning and assessment, and the resulting learner record. That gives institutions a basis for supporting progression without making the credential itself the focus of the experience.

UNDERSTAND THE WORK BEFORE TRYING TO SCALE IT

A smooth learner experience can depend on work that is almost invisible outside the team doing it. Staff may have become so used to an extra check, a spreadsheet, or a reminder email that they no longer think of it as a separate process. Ask colleagues to show what actually happens, including the steps they take when the normal route fails.

In our conversation with Yacob Abdi at UChicago Professional, we explored evaluating change through people, process, data, and technology, in that order. Understanding who performs the work and why it exists gives the institution a clearer basis for deciding what a system should do.

Take registration approval. Some checks protect eligibility or financial controls; others may be left over from a process that has changed. Clear rules might allow routine registrations to proceed, with staff reviewing exceptions. Understanding that distinction is more useful than making every existing approval faster.

Once the work is visible, compare the effect on learners, the number of people affected, staff time, effort to improve, and departmental priorities. A small team may need a simpler model with fewer exceptions. A large institution may need better coordination across departments. In either setting, identify what additional work each new learner creates and whether that work is necessary.

Jones College's Online Workforce College offers a small-team example. Eduframe has described OWC serving more than 5,000 learners annually with two staff, supported by intentional program design, automation, and streamlined workflows. The lesson for other institutions is to examine how their operating choices affect the capacity to serve learners.





"Brightspace to be the critical infrastructure, and when we find a strong adjacency like continuing education, we lean into a best-of-breed partner. For continuing education, that's Eduframe."

Kenneth Chapman, SVP, Strategic Alliances and Channel Sales

CONNECT THE SYSTEM OF RECORD AND THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

D2L often describes Eduframe as the system of record for continuing education. That role extends beyond the point of registration. It provides a consistent administrative foundation for the learner relationship, covering course and program information, learner records, enrollments, corporate arrangements, and the operational and financial processes around them. Reporting and automation depend on that information being maintained and used consistently.

Brightspace provides the learning environment in which people engage with the course, participate in activities, receive feedback, and demonstrate progress. Bringing the two roles together helps institutions connect their educational offer and business operations with what happens during learning. A returning learner's history can then inform the next administrative step, while the learning environment supports the current experience.

The institution still needs to define responsibilities across its wider systems. Which record should others follow when an email address changes? What happens when someone transfers courses or withdraws? Which results need to return from the learning environment, and who resolves a failed handoff? Agreeing those rules is part of making the connection dependable.

Reporting needs shared definitions too. Agree what counts as an active learner, a completion, or a return before comparing results across departments. Use that information to answer practical questions about learner support, program value, and capacity. Test the full experience, including exceptions, so that staff can see whether the connected systems reduce checking and correction in everyday work.

CHOOSE ONE IMPROVEMENT TO MAKE IN THE NEXT 90 DAYS

A useful starting point is one workflow where a change would matter to learners and where the institution has capacity to make progress. Follow it from beginning to end, including exceptions, and agree how you will know whether the change helped.

The SCALE diagnostic can organize that discussion. Simplify the model by questioning avoidable steps. Connect the ecosystem by agreeing where information belongs. Automate repeatable actions with clear rules for exceptions. Link learning into pathways with transparent progression requirements. Expand access and impact by testing an improvement with a specific learner group.

In the first month, understand the workflow and establish a baseline. In the second, implement a manageable change with the colleagues involved. In the third, review the result with the people who use it and decide what to adjust or extend.

Your 90-day worksheet

The learner group and workflow we will focus on are ...	
The problem learners or staff experience today is ...	
Our baseline and the evidence behind it are ...	
The change we will test and the person responsible are ...	
The colleagues and partners who need to contribute are ...	
The result we want to see by the review date is ...	
What we learned and what we will do next are ...	

An institution earns the opportunity to welcome learners back through the experience it provides. Relevant learning gives people a reason to choose it. Dependable delivery and thoughtful support help build trust and connection. Clear pathways give that relationship somewhere to go next.

For Eduframe and D2L, the shared opportunity is to help institutions sustain that relationship by connecting their continuing education operations with a strong learning experience. The test is whether learners feel the benefit and whether staff can keep delivering it as the institution grows.

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