

Executive Summary

GRONINGEN DECLARATION 5th Annual Meeting

A Digital World for All: Making Skills Mobile

17-19 May, 2016
Cape Town, South Africa



NATIONAL STUDENT
CLEARINGHOUSE



Education Executive Agency
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science



The dream became a reality!

As CEO of the South African Qualifications Authority SAQA, which hosted the 2016 Groningen Declaration Network's annual meeting, it is my pleasure to preface this year's GDN Annual Meeting's Executive report. Let me express my gratitude and appreciation by echoing part of my words of welcome at the opening of the meeting.

On behalf of SAQA as the local host, it has been our great pleasure to welcome you in Cape Town to the Groningen Declaration Network Annual Meeting. In the morning of Wednesday 18 May, when we were on the ferry on our way to Robben Island and I saw Table Mountain in the background, I was reminded of the bid we made to host the Annual Meeting here in Cape Town as part of SAQA's 20th birthday celebrations. It dawned on me that the dream we had then has become a reality today! So, thank you for making our dream a reality and for sharing this moment with us!

As part of the SAQA bid, I argued that SAQA and the GDN have **synergy of purpose and interests**. GDN wants to be a truly global network, and therefore the African continent is a key component of the Global Community. SAQA and South Africa are integral parts of the African Continent, and both want to ensure that the Continent is part of the development of this digital movement that will be revolutionising the world. Working together, we can make this dream come true for all participating organizations.

Holding the Annual Meeting in Cape Town and on the Continent gave the GDN a **great opportunity to influence** the movement towards digitising student data records and **establishing partnerships** with the African Continent. The launch of the African Qualifications Verification Network (AQVN) on Monday 16 May presented such an opportunity already and through SAQA, the GDN leadership participated in a live television broadcast that reached over six million viewers and is now available [here](#), on YouTube. Working together with the AQVN, the whole continent will feel the influence of the GDN.

By way of conclusion - we know that many of this year's participants have travelled very long distances, and we are grateful that you made the time. We are happy that this is the largest number to date of GDN delegates to come – and we are very pleased to have been able to show to you the best our wonderful city and country have to offer!

Once again, thanks for having come and we hope you enjoyed the stay as much as we did! Our dream is now a reality!

Joe Samuels, CEO, South African Qualifications Authority

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Key Themes: Groningen Declaration Annual Meeting 2016

Overview

Digital technologies are transforming the world at the same time that international student mobility continues to grow. This makes the Groningen Declaration and its focus on international student mobility facilitated by digitization of academic records more relevant than ever.

The fifth annual meeting of the Groningen Declaration represented a moment of maturation. This maturation was seen by the growth in the number of signatories and pilots, and in Groningen being termed a “movement” that is bigger than a declaration. Maturation is seen by interest in legally formalizing the organization to secure more funding and add staff, by interest in a global convention, and by task forces to tackle issues such as vision, verification, and dissemination.

Maturation is also seen by more countries adopting digital technologies to store and transfer academic records, by participation by more institutions, and by addressing key issues such as ease of use, privacy, and security. Those who are moving forward say it is not easy. Success requires a clear vision, resilience, and collaboration. But the benefits are great and the future for this movement is very bright.

Key Themes

Higher education is increasingly global.

One theme mentioned throughout this meeting is the basic idea that there are increased numbers of students across the globe, there is increased mobility, and the nature of higher education and educational institutions is increasingly global. Therefore, systems, processes, and policies need to be improved to support this trend of increasing student mobility.

Groningen is not merely a declaration; it is a movement.

A central theme was the idea that Groningen is not just a statement or a declaration; it has grown into a powerful movement with significant momentum. Everyone buys into the vision and sees benefits of international student mobility and electronic versions of academic records that facilitate mobility. As one participant said, “No one needs to be sold on this.”

“Before coming here I had in mind there is a declaration, but here we have a movement that is more than a declaration.”

— Borhene Chakroun, Chief of Section, UNESCO

The idea that this is a movement can be seen in the growth and progress that has been made over the past five years.

To further advance this movement, greater formality is required.

Discussions focused on aligning Groningen with the UN's 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. A task force of the Groningen Declaration Network is considering formalizing Groningen as a legal entity, which would provide greater ability to secure funding and add staff. Participants expressed commitment and support for this evolution.

A major area of focus: verification.

Multiple speakers pointed out that fraud and academic misrepresentation are major problems across the globe. To facilitate international mobility it is therefore essential that academic records be trusted and verified. Speakers described how processes and technologies need to ensure privacy and security while ensuring that information is trusted and verified.

Illustrating the importance of verification is the creation by the Groningen Declaration of a Verification Policy and Best Practices Task Force and creation in Africa of the African Qualifications Verification Network, which provides credible verification of qualifications.

Multiple pilots show the progress being made across the globe.

A showcasing of pilots revealed how digital technologies are being leveraged to facilitate international student mobility. Pilots included:

- **China.** CHESICC's database CHSI was built in the early 2000s to store student records and verify credentials. U.S. institutions use this resource to verify the academic credentials of Chinese students applying for admission.
- **India.** A national academic depository (NAD) has been created that holds academic information from multiple institutions, providing an electronic academic record.
- **Nordic countries and EMREX project.** Multiple Nordic countries, in addition to Italy and Poland, are working on the EMREX project, which will enable electronic transfer of student data between institutions.
- **Australia and New Zealand.** 47 universities in these two countries are collaborating on a digital platform.
- **Netherlands and Belgium.** In the Netherlands 100% of the enrollment process is digital, and the Netherlands is looking to use these capabilities for students who are applying to institutions outside of the Netherlands, or students from other countries wanting to apply to an institution in the Netherlands.

- **France.** The Ministry of Education has announced plans to have a digital platform for storing and providing certification.

Among all of these pilots there were several consistent themes:

- **Digital repository.** A necessary first step is a repository that brings together all of the academic data for students in a country.
- **Standards in data transfer.** Once data is brought together, mobility is facilitated by being able to transfer data. There is great interest in turning what has been a manual, paper-based process into digital. However, transferring data requires standards (like XML) and interoperability.
- **Privacy and security.** In all pilots the importance of data privacy and security were stressed. In most instances, data is transferred only with the permission of the student, and is transferred securely within closed networks.
- **Collaboration.** There was broad recognition that initiatives are more successful when multiple stakeholders are engaged.

Participants are thinking broadly about digital electronic academic records.

The primary focus of the Groningen Declaration is the use of digital technologies to facilitate international student mobility in higher education. However, several presenters described how they are thinking more broadly:

- **From national to global.** Many initiatives are taking place at the national or regional level, to aggregate student data and be able to transfer it within a country or possibly a region. However, those who have done this see the greater need to be able to transfer data globally, requiring global standards, interoperability, and collaboration.
- **Beyond higher ed.** Presenters from different countries described creating an overall academic record which might include high school information as well as information from technical or vocational schools.
- **A career/employment focus.** Employers are an important stakeholder who want to be able to review and verify academic records.
- **Immigrants and refugees.** An often-overlooked group are immigrants and refugees who may not have paper-based certifications to demonstrate their academic achievements. Electronic records would be extremely beneficial for these individuals.

These are all use cases of how a secure, scalable system for storing and transferring verified academic information can provide even greater benefits.

Words of Welcome

Speakers: **Janie Ayers Barnett**, Associate Executive Director, AACRAO
Victoriano Giralt, President, Groningen Declaration Network, Universidad de Málaga
Joe Samuels, Chief Executive Officer, SAQA (South African Qualifications Authority)
Rick Torres, President, National Student Clearinghouse
Wim Westerbeek, Deputy Director General, DUO

Overview

In welcoming participants to the fifth convening of the Groningen Declaration, representatives of several key host organizations reiterated their support. They stressed the benefits of the Groningen Declaration, reflected on the progress that has been made, and looked forward to even further progress from this convening and in the months and years ahead.

Key Takeaways

- **Cape Town, South Africa is an outstanding location for this convening.**

It is important to have come to Cape Town. There is a synergy of purpose and interests between the South African Qualifications Framework—SAQA in particular—and the Groningen Declaration Network (GDN). That synergy of purpose is to move to a digitized future, and for everyone to be moving in the same direction. In addition, the presence of the GDN is a great opportunity to influence what is happening in Africa.

- **AACRAO supports Groningen, student mobility, and global exchange of data.**

Janie Barnett delivered a prepared remark on behalf of AACRAO. It highlighted that AACRAO has served as a conduit for discussion in the United States on key issues related to the Groningen Declaration, such as electronic exchange of student data, privacy, authentication of data, and recognition and acceptance of digital student data.

The benefits of a global electronic exchange are many, and institutions that have adopted electronic record exchange can speak to the efficiency gains and improvement in business processes. For institutions that enroll large numbers of international students, the ability to process documentation electronically has huge benefits and is student-centered.

AACRAO looks forward to sharing new developments and insights with the organization's 11,000 members around the globe.

- **DUO sees the theme of this conference as extremely timely.**

The central theme of this gathering is a digital world for all and making skills mobile. This theme matches the course that DUO has taken. DUO is the Dutch Education Executive Agency on behalf of the Ministry of Education.

In the Netherlands, DUO has created a diploma register that enables the public to digitally access results and certificates recorded by DUO. Data is also being used in entirely digital registration processes. And, employers will soon be able to verify certificates digitally as part of pre-employment screening.

DUO is at the forefront of digital student data, but DUO is not alone and has much to learn from others. Further progress and acceleration will only come through collaboration.

- **Digitization is about more than just student mobility.**

- Rick Torres agrees with the benefits of digital portability to learners. But, he emphasized that there are many other significant benefits as well, such as a reduction in the administrative burden, and the ability to transfer payments. Realizing the potential benefits takes a great deal of work behind the scenes on policies, technology, business cases, use cases, standards, and more.

Opening Keynote: Shared Global Visions, Shared Global Concerns

Daan du Toit, Deputy Director-General, South African Dept. of Science & Technology

Session Overview

In science and technology, international cooperation is essential. No country has the resources to do everything. International partnerships—within and beyond Africa—provide access to more experiences and resources. Mobility of knowledge workers and students matter, as everything starts with people.

Key Takeaways

- Science knows no borders.
- We live in a world of shared societal challenges, like climate change, energy, and security. Society's response should be global.
- International cooperation on science and technology is imperative. No country has adequate resources, investment, and expertise to do major projects alone. Collaboration is essential. In South Africa, 15% of R&D is foreign funded.
- In addition to international cooperation, further cooperation within Africa is a political and economic priority.
- Collaboration starts with people, particularly researchers and students. There must be a mobility of students and knowledge workers who can move freely and have their information go with them. Digital student data portability matters.
- Africa doesn't have enough capacity to train all of the students needed, making it essential for students to travel for education. When students travel and learn internationally, they benefit tremendously.
- There will be more South to South mobility.
- There are challenges with international student mobility such as ensuring a match between the training that students receive and societal needs; difficulty getting information about international programs and opportunities; recognition of quality and qualifications of international programs; language difficulties; and both ignorance and prejudice.
- The priorities of the Groningen Declaration correspond with the mission of the South Africa Department of Science & Technology.

Action Items

- Continue pursuing programs and partnerships that foster international collaboration in science and technology education. Such partnerships are essential.

- Address the challenges and remove barriers to international student mobility.

UNESCO Keynote: Preparing for a Global Convention on Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications

Lene Oftedal, Project Expert Global Recognition Convention, UNESCO

Session Overview

UNESCO is advocating for a global convention that is a legal instrument that provides fair recognition through due process. Recognition is based on principles laid out in a framework, built upon regional conventions (some of which need to be revised). This is necessary in light of increased numbers of students, increased mobility, and the increasingly global nature of higher education.

Key Takeaways

- The rationale for a global convention includes: a massification of higher education with a huge increase in the number of students; increased mobility; the need for a common framework to handle this mobility; institutions redefining their missions to be more global; increased international cooperation; a diversity of providers (ranging from traditional institutions to online providers), and a large number of refugees and displaced people.
- Recognition is a global issue. In 2000 there were about 100 million students. In 2020 there may be 215 million. It is a waste if students' qualifications aren't mobile.
- The main goal of a global convention is to develop principles and a global framework for recognition of higher education qualifications.
- Other goals include strengthening inter-regional academic mobility, promoting international cooperation, raising awareness about recognition on a policy level, and supporting capacity building.
- It is important for the framework to support lifelong learning, as lifelong learners are coming back to universities.
- The convention must take into account quality assurance as part of recognition.
- There are already 6 regional conventions; 3 have been revised in recent years. Recognition should be granted unless there are substantial differences between educational systems. The global convention should build on the regional conventions with overarching frameworks.

Action Items

- Work should proceed on a global convention that builds on regional conventions. This should be discussed at the UNESCO General Conference 2017. Regional conventions

can be revised and implemented while developing the global convention.

- More should be done to ratify the Addis Convention for Africa.

UNESCO Keynote: Groningen, Qingdao, Capetown? On Education 2030 Digital Vision and the Contribution of the Groningen Declaration

Borhene Chakroun, Chief of Section, UNESCO

Session Overview

The Groningen Declaration is doing outstanding things. Four key takeaways are to anchor Groningen in the UN's 2030 agenda, expand thinking beyond higher education to lifelong learning, realize that Groningen is part of the data revolution, and view Groningen as a movement, not just a declaration.

Key Takeaways

- As part of its [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), the UN has 17 goals. They include goals on eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, and much more. One important goal is for quality education that ensures inclusive, equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning for all. Important in achieving these goals are new types of education and skill development.
- The sustainable development agenda is focused on 5 P's: People, Prosperity, Peace, Partnership, Planet.
- UNESCO is fundamentally a body for standard setting, influencing agenda, and convening. It is not a funding party.
- The Groningen Declaration needs to be anchored in the broad agenda of the 2030 goals and also needs to stress the importance of lifelong learning.
- One important element of the sustainable development agenda is "the data revolution." This is about data for people and the planet. It is about technology innovation. It is about governance and leadership. It requires capacity and resources, and must deal with challenges of privacy and security.
- Last year the UN adopted the [Qingdao Declaration](#), which is anchored in the 2030 agenda. It emphasizes equal access, inclusiveness, and capacity development in education. It also calls for free sharing and open education resources, seizing the opportunity of technology, and enabling the portability of education and training data.
- As part of the Qingdao Declaration the UN adopted several goals related to teachers, equal opportunities, inclusivity, and public-private partnerships (PPP). These considerations are important to the Groningen Declaration.

- It is important for Groningen to take a lifelong learning perspective. It should be more than just higher education and more than credentials.
- Groningen should be more than a "declaration." It is a "movement." It has to be framed and anchored as part of the SDGs and part of the data revolution.

Action Items

- Those involved with Groningen should: 1) link work being done with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals; and 2) view Groningen as a movement.

Closing Keynote: Qualification Passports, Virtual Learning Environment and Blockchain Technology

Rolf Lofstad, Senior Advisor, NOKUT

Tauhid Pasha, Senior Specialist, IOM International Organization for Migration

Willi Weisflog, Head of Curriculum, Kiron Open Higher Education GmbH

Session Overview

There are millions of migrants and refugees, many of whom didn't choose to migrate and may not have documented evidence of their educational achievements. To integrate these individuals, enable them to get jobs and enroll in further education, reliable information is necessary. The Groningen Declaration provides an important conceptual framework that will be of great value and assistance to migrants and refugees; it can have a concrete impact for people in need.

Key Takeaways

- A clear observation: everyone involved is working towards one common goal of facilitating mobility through education. The Groningen Declaration as a tool has a valuable framework and other valuable tools are being developed, like the global convention.
- When someone moves of their own free will it is a great thing. They meet others, experience new cultures, and learn. There are over 250 million international migrants, living outside of their country of birth. This is set to double in the next 20-30 years. More than 60 million people worldwide have been forced to flee.
- The number of people migrating of their own free will is fairly predictable and tools exist to support them. More are coming with UNESCO's global convention.
- The mandate of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is to make migration safer and more humane. Turkey and Jordan host the most refugees. Parts of Lebanon are 60%-70% refugees. IOM counts migrant deaths daily.

- Hundreds of thousands of people are taking enormous risks to move from many countries. Among the reasons for migration are instability, conflict, terror, poverty, oppression, environmental degradation—and even lack of access to education.
- The last thing on someone's mind when leaving their home is grabbing an official copy of their educational certificates. Many countries are excluding refugees from access to education. When crossing the Mediterranean Sea, few are thinking about having a copy of their high school diploma. If there were digital records from credible institutions, those records would be accessible. This would help refugees resettle, access labor markets, and reach their potential.
- An example of considering migrants is in Section 7 of the Lisbon Acquisition Convention. It states that parties to this convention should establish procedures to secure fair recognition of qualifications from refugees, displaced persons, and persons in refugee situations, even if qualifications cannot be proven by documentary evidence. Different countries have responded differently to this section.
- The UN has identified 4 main barriers that refugees face in gaining access to higher education: financial barriers, legal barriers, limited capacity at institutions, and language barriers.
- Early and effective evaluation of refugees' qualifications and skills including those without proper documentation will enable society and individuals to benefit from a rapid and effective integration process. Rapid integration is necessary to prevent the formation of ghettos that can be a breeding ground for crime.
- By December 2015 there were over 1 million migrants in Europe, putting a strain on systems. Approaches to deal with this situation have included: 1) allocate more resources to increase capacity; and 2) try different approaches. One example is a European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR), valid for 3 years, facilitating mobility and access to education. A pilot in Norway indicates this may be a valuable tool.
- Kiron builds partnerships with online course providers and universities to combine MOOCs into a learning curriculum that enables refugees to start studying immediately, transforming a refugee into a student. Kiron provides refugees with 2 years of courses in 4 study tracks—for free. Student can then transfer to a partner university which recognizes most or all of the courses. Curriculum is being developed for MOOCs, and MOOCs are being matched with learning outcomes. A long-term dream is a global comprehensive equivalency database.
- Kiron also provides various support services, such as counseling, buddy programs, and career mentoring to support refugees.
- Kiron is shifting from traditional PDF certificates towards a digital solution, probably using open badges and maybe

blockchain, along with something that looks more traditional for conservative universities.

- The Groningen Declaration facilitates matters by making sure agencies talk to each other and that qualifications go cross-border.

Action Items

- The work of the Groningen Declaration must be supported and continued, as well as the dissemination and use of this concept.
- Explore using concepts such as Kiron for more than just refugees to educate and train the 100 million people who need a bachelor's degree.

AQVN: African Qualifications Verification Network Report

Joe Samuels, CEO, SAQA (South African Qualifications Authority)

Session Overview

An important step to enable mobility is to ensure that qualifications are credible and verified. Unfortunately, in many instances today there is fraud and misrepresentation. The African Qualifications Verification Network aims to help address this through credible verification of qualifications. AQVN is a network, collaborating to form common frameworks and advocate for policies. Much progress has been made. Further work is needed to form partnerships, learn from other regions, and proceed to digitization of paper-based systems.

Key Takeaways

- AQVN has just been launched.
- The idea for AQVN started with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). Part of what SAQA does is recognize foreign qualifications through a directorate called the Foreign Qualification Evaluation and Advisory Services. People come with qualifications (largely paper-based), and SAQA looks at the qualifications to: 1) verify them; and 2) compare the qualifications to determine how they fit into the South African education and training system.
- SAQA discovered an increase in the qualifications being submitted that were not what they seemed. They were fake and misrepresented qualifications. Also, people were providing information on supposed verification agencies that were dubious.
- There was also an increase in degrees of all types being obtained online.
- This led SAQA to conclude, "We will take verification very, very seriously." Qualifications are now verified to see if

they are authentic and where they fit in within South Africa.

- This has also meant looking at the institutions to see if they are accredited and looking at the documentation.
- This manual, paper-based verification process often took up to a year.
- These problems led to the idea of a network (AQVN) to solve these problems by creation of a network in Africa of institutions that are credible and trustworthy.
- In November 2014 an international seminar was organized in Pretoria, with 14 countries sending representatives. It became clear that most countries were still working with paper-based certificates and student data. The group concluded that it was necessary to simultaneously work to make paper-based processes more secure with an aim of eventually digitizing.
- After the 2014 convening, it was apparent that a great deal of work needed to take place to develop trust between the institutions in the different countries.
- AQVN is looking at research to be done, and is promoting the positives of qualification verification, not just stamping out fraud and corruption.
- AQVN is thinking about a policy framework within Africa for verification as well as a legal framework for dealing with misrepresented qualifications. An organization like SAQA can state if a qualification is not verified; it is up to a court of law to determine fraud. AQVN has found that many countries don't have a legal framework.
- AQVN needs to assist in putting together frameworks to have a common approach at policy level.

Action Items

- Look at which countries have decentralized systems and see how to pull information together, and see which countries have centralized repositories and how they can be linked.
- Engage in building capacity and infrastructure.
- Develop partnerships.
- Proceed towards digitization.

Panel Discussion: Verification Policy and Best Practices

Navin Vasudev, Deputy Director, SAQA (South African Qualifications Authority)

Meg Wenger, Senior Director of Evaluation, ECE (Educational Credential Evaluators)

Session Overview

This session provided an overview about the work of a new task force focused on verification.

Key Takeaways

- GDN's executive committee set up a task force on policy and best practices in verification. The team refers to this as a "community of practice."
- The task force created a concept note that enumerated its vision and focus. The idea is to identify, consolidate, map, and share ground-level best practices in verification.
- Important elements included global representation, identifying and publicizing current and innovative practices, and identifying procedures and standards. The task force looked at misrepresentation and fraud, and identified possibilities of exchanges and cross-learning between task force members.
- The task force has discussed conducting a survey to understand best practices.
- One conclusion: it may be necessary to take a step back to define terms like "accreditation."
- In the future, everything will be digital, but it isn't yet.
- Best practices will need to exist for sending institutions, receiving institutions, third-party depositories, and more.
- The work of this task force is creating a critical foundation for student data portability.
- Initial pilots have shown privacy to be a critically important area. This involves understanding what conditions need to be true to authenticate a requester of information. What does it mean to have "consent?" How does a person get consent? Other key points involve security and transparency.

Action Items

- Proceed with the work of this task force, including developing best practices and establishing timelines.
- Continue to conduct pilots and derive learning from them.

Panel Discussion: GDN Mid-term Vision 2020

Moderator: **Michael D. Sessa**, President & CEO, PESC (Postsecondary Electronic Standards Co.)

Panelists:

Mikael Berglund, System Developer, Umeå University
Doug Falk, Vice President & CIO, National Student Clearinghouse

Valère Meus, International Relations Expert, Ghent University

Neil Robinson, Academic Registrar, The University of Melbourne

Michael Zhang Zhiyuan, Project Manager for International Promotion, CHESICC (China Higher Education Student Information and Career Center)

Session Overview

A task force has been focused on thinking about the future of the Groningen Declaration, which has evolved significantly as a movement. Ideas include formalizing Groningen as a legal entity, which would provide the ability to secure funding, and adding formal staff. Participants were supportive of this evolution and committed to make this happen.

Key Takeaways

- Everyone at the Groningen Declaration is a volunteer who believes in the mission. Everyone needs to come together to make the structure and model permanent. The crux of this session: making GDN formal and permanent. As Groningen moves forward it needs nurturing. A task force was formed to facilitate a successful future for GDN.
- Currently, everything is paid for by sponsors, but this isn't sustainable long term. The revenue stream needs to be diversified.
- Is it the right time for Groningen to become legal? To become a formal, non-profit entity? To have "members?" To have a secretariat? To have "signatories" that sign on to the Groningen principles? To be a pilot? Should there be a conference planning committee? (If so, it must be diverse.) Should there be a conference registration fee?
- The task force believes that with increasing numbers of students crossing borders, Groningen needs to be solid and sustainable for the future. This entails establishing a permanent home. By becoming a legal entity it would be possible to apply for certain types of funding.
- In the short term, funding is required as well as dedicated staff. The task force wants to keep Herman as the executive director, paid by revenue sources other than DUO. (One comment: there are professional organizations that run associations for a fee. This is something to consider.) Also, a process is needed in the short term to define participation in Groningen. One perspective: growth happens in evolutionary steps.
- Per the suggestion in a previous keynote, there is an opportunity to think bigger and think like a movement, which is a natural evolution. Today, things are just scratching the surface.
- The technology is ready to do what needs to be done. The barrier is that the cooperation is not ready. This takes consensus building, which must take into account various cultures.
- When formalizing and then going for funding, funding is provided for action and output. There will need to be an evolution in defining what success looks like.

Action Items

- The EC needs to consider the recommendations of this task force—which were strongly supported by session participants—to continue to evolve the Groningen Declaration by making it more formal, legal, and seeking funding as well as staffing.

Panel Discussion: Empowering Cross-Border Enrollment and Student Loan Portability

Cheryl Darrup Boychuck, Chief Architect and Owner, FundsV - Funds Verification for International Education
Jelger de Boer, Consultant on Business Processes and Quality Control, DUO

Evi Verduyck, Head of Unit, AHOVOKS (Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Student Finance)

Per Zettervall, Director, UHR Swedish Council for Higher Education

Session Overview

Increasingly, students are being allowed to take their loans abroad. Efforts are underway to reduce the administrative burden while also making sure that things are happening in an honest way, with no fraud. A pilot in the Netherlands provides an example of exchanging data to provide verification and streamline the process.

Key Takeaways

- Groningen has created a task force on cross-border enrollment and student loan portability.
- In the Netherlands it is possible to receive a student loan or grant and use that loan to study abroad, which facilitates student mobility. The requirements are that the education abroad needs to be of sufficient quality; the student needs to be enrolled full time, and financial aid from another government is not permitted. Currently, about 11,000 students study abroad with financial aid from DUO.
- Verification of enrollment is key to ensure that funds are allocated lawfully. Verification using manual forms places an administrative burden on students, institutions, and DUO.
- A pilot project was started to lower the administrative burdens of receiving a student loan or grant. The pilot involved a contract with the Flemish counterpart of DUO, AHOVOKS. Both parties have registers containing student data, with one big data warehouse, and a good legal basis making the exchange of data possible. There is a secure portal using the DUO website.
- In the Netherlands, a performance grant means a student has to perform to receive financial aid and must verify that they actually received a degree.

- Other task forces include a business case task force that is putting together a framework and a dissemination task force.

Showcasing Pilots

At the inception of the Groningen Declaration was the notion of undertaking multiple pilots. The idea was to “think big, but act small.” Part of acting small is engaging in pilots to learn. In this session information was shared from seven pilots.

Update on Universities Australia's Road Towards the National Digital Student Academic Record Data Management Solution

Neil Robinson, Academic Registrar, The University of Melbourne

Session Overview

In Australia and New Zealand 47 universities are collaborating on a digital platform. A partner has been selected for this platform, which is proceeding to be implemented broadly by the end of 2017. It has been a difficult process, requiring collaboration, resilience, persistence, and clarity of vision.

Key Takeaways

- Key issues in Australia have been in relation to public scrutiny of the validity of qualifications following scandals in the media about fraudulent claims.
- This pilot had no mandate from the government; it was entirely self-generated from universities in Australia and New Zealand. The only way to make progress was through collaboration, which has been significant.
- There are 47 universities participating in this initiative; 39 in Australia and 8 in New Zealand. In the absence of a government mandate, the initiative has worked with various agencies and built a coalition of support. Each institution contributed 5,000 Australian dollars and made significant in-kind contributions.
- In phase 1, 70% of participating universities contributed financial and student data to model what a future state might look like. A request for a tender process took place in proposing a single option for Australia and New Zealand; 21 universities took part in evaluating this option.
- The initiative is now in phase 2, which gets harder. Due diligence has been completed and a preferred partner has been chosen that meets all of the requirements from the tender process. The result will be an agreed-upon, single Australia/New Zealand digital platform. Work is underway

to create a detailed plan, determine implementation costs, and resolve contracts.

- All participating universities have made additional contributions of another 5,000 Australian dollars. The next milestone is to agree on a rollout plan by July 2016, with pilot sites running in 2016 and plans to roll out across Australia and New Zealand by the end of 2017.
- Lessons learned thus far from this process include: 1) have an independent third-party facilitator to manage the tender process; 2) you must have resilience and keep going, despite obstacles; 3) keep talking outside of and between meetings to keep people connected and motivated; 4) map the stakeholders and ecosystem; know who all of the key players and influencers are and keep talking to them; 5) don't get distracted; and 6) keep it simple; there must be a simple vision.

CHESICC Update

Michael Zhang Zhiyuan, Project Manager for International Promotion, CHESICC (China Higher Education Student Information and Career Center)

Shi Peng Jian, Deputy Director General, CHESICC (China Higher Education Student Information and Career Center)

Session Overview

CHESICC has made tremendous progress in a short time in building a system for storing student records and verifying credentials. This system enables student mobility, which is extremely important, with more than 300,000 Chinese college students in the United States. CHESICC is going further by engaging in multiple pilots around the world that involve exchanging electronic data as well as extending its systems to be an academic portfolio that includes high school transcripts.

Key Takeaways

- After over 20 years of exploration and development, CHESICC has been able to build up a multi-dimensional service system for student record and qualification management, credential verification, university admissions, student career guidance, and sponsorship. This system used the CHSI website to facilitate students in public organizations by taking advantage of networks and big data.
- CHESICC has 142 million records in its system. Last year, 13.1 million students graduated and 21.6 million new students signed up to use the system. The system was used for millions of electronic and paper reports. It was used for overseas study, qualification exams, background screening for employment, visas, and issuing credit cards. This system helps greatly in facilitating student mobility.
- There are currently 304,000 students studying in the United States. To facilitate student mobility, CHESICC has participated in several pilots. This includes a pilot with UT Austin which can receive reports electronically. In another

pilot, there is a highly integrated college application system where students can request verifications through a web system and attach reports to admission officials.

- CHESICC has been working with Parchment. Parchment members can accept verified Chinese academic credentials electronically through CHESICC. Institutions are assured of the integrity of the records and receive them in an electronic format, saving money and enabling accurate evaluation.
- CHESICC has other pilots underway in collaboration with organization in the United States, in Europe, and in Australia.
- Among the issues CHESICC has experienced in its pilots include student privacy, cyber security, the application process, and technical issues. Solutions are being worked on for each of these issues, including all students having to give their consent and authorization to send reports.
- At the end of this year CHESICC will have a complete “academic portfolio” for students, including being able to verify high school transcripts.

C-NAD, CDSL’s National Academic Depository Update

Amee Shroff, Head, CDSL (Central Depository Services (India) Limited)

Sahil Gandhi, Assistant Manager, Information Technology, CDSL (Central Depository Services (India) Limited)

Session Overview

India is moving forward with creation of a national academic depository (NAD) to hold academic awards from academic institutions in electronic form. The system is far along in its development and has been adopted by a few academic institutions. There are modules for students, academic institutions, and verifiers, as well as for online payment. NAD’s development includes state-of-the art IT standards and security features.

Key Takeaways

- NAD is an idea for a national academic depository in India. It is a repository for holding academic awards issued by academic institutions in electronic form. This initially started in 2010 and has taken baby steps.
- In India there are 744 academic institutions (universities). There are about 45,000 colleges affiliated with universities.
- Key stakeholders in this undertaking include students, academic institutions, employers, and NAD facilitation centers.
- The idea is that NAD will hold in electronic form for academic institutions transcripts, degree certificates, transfer certificates, and other types of certificates.

- Thus far, just 6 or 7 institutions are participating, as a decision to adopt takes time. However, 1 institution has decided it will no longer offer any physical certificates.
- Students will have a “student module” that students will be able to access using their unique personal ID number issued by the government of India. Students will be authenticated, and must provide consent for viewing or sharing of information. The repository can link to and hold all awards from undergraduate through post-graduate from all institutions.
- There is a module for academic institutions where institutions can create users, create courses, issue duplicate awards, verify awards, and more.
- Other modules include a verifier module and an online payment module. The system has significant, state-of-the-art security and uses multiple IT standards.
- One example of the benefits of this electronic system: today, verification of a certificate in India can take 1 to 6 months. With NAD, the goal is for verification within 24 hours.

National Student Clearinghouse Global Pilots Update

Rick Torres, President, National Student Clearinghouse

Session Overview

The National Student Clearinghouse is engaged in multiple pilots across the world, including in Mexico. This presentation featured a pilot in China. This pilot focuses on creating standards-based approaches to data exchange and verifying the data sources to ensure they are trusted. Keys include data privacy and security. As this work proceeds it is important to maintain a global perspective with an ultimate vision for global standards that enables data sharing globally.

Key Takeaways

- This pilot in China involves working with three agencies in the Chinese Ministry of Education. They are: CHESICC (for transcripts and qualification certificates), CDGDC (for degrees), and CSCSE (for foreign credential evaluation).
- Desired outcomes include reducing fraud, decreasing the administrative burden, and increasing administrative productivity, as well as increasing the level of verified student-level information and data transparency at the point of admission. An additional goal is creating a system and process that can be standardized in multiple countries. The key is minimizing administrative friction in the admissions process. The big deal is transforming the status quo, which is hard.
- The idea here is to change the paradigm through standard-based processes and practices.

- The first thing in China is to be able to trust the source. This requires validating the sources of data, the processes, and the players in the ecosystem.
- A key element is a standards-based approach to data exchange. Exchanging information starts with a PDF, but institutions want an XML and/or EDI standard.
- An example was shared of how information is shared. It is a closed, secure, school-to-school system that a student doesn't have access to. There has to be buy-in from administration and agencies, and it must be a well-understood, scalable process. A customized solution is great but isn't scalable.
- The desire for standards includes standards for Chinese completion certificates and entrance exams, as well as degrees and transcripts.
- As China is moving down this path, other initiatives are happening elsewhere. It is extremely important to move towards a global set of standards, with the same documents and information, and integration. Different systems must be able to work together so data is portable in a transparent way.
- An issue is inconsistency in the treatment of two-year associate's degrees from U.S. community colleges and two-year programs in China, which are often technical in nature. A credential meeting is being planned to determine how to address this. The intent is to encourage more Chinese students to come to the U.S. at the community college level.
- Another key issue is the privacy environment. A new EU/U.S. Privacy Shield Framework is being developed.
- Next steps include completing and testing standard data transmissions, with testing of PESC standards. Also, the National Student Clearinghouse has launched USA-Connect and is rolling out standards-based protocols to all U.S. institutions.

EMREX: Rolling Out Data Transfer Services for Mobile Students in Nordic Countries and Beyond

Janina Mincer-Daszkiewicz, Associate Professor, University of Warsaw

Mats Lindstedt, Project Manager/Coordinator EMREX Project, CSC – IT Center for Science Ltd.

Mattias Holmlund, Project Manager, Umeå University

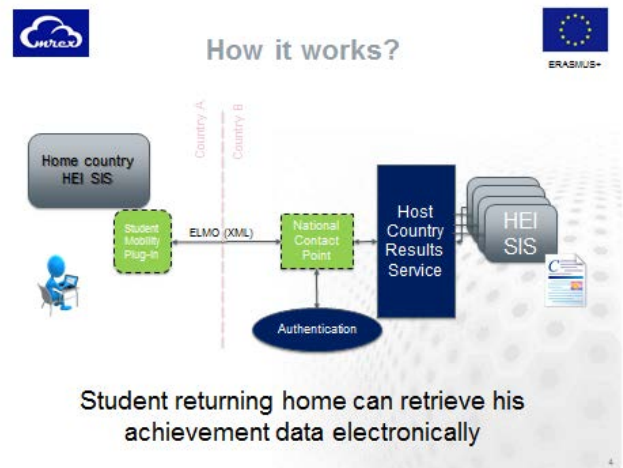
Mikael Berglund, System Developer, Umeå University

Session Overview

EMREX is a pilot in Nordic countries, along with Italy and Poland, that involves being able to electronically transfer student data between institutions in these countries. This is an EU Erasmus+ project. There is much interest in the concept; the challenges are about making it work. The first stage of the pilot has just begun and the results are positive.

Key Takeaways

- EMREX is an EU Erasmus+ project that is a ministry-level initiative. The goal is to increase student mobility to 20%. A key to achieving that goal is being able to electronically transfer student records between universities. This pilot consists of a field trial followed by evaluation of impact.
- Everyone wants data to be transferred electronically. They want a fast, reliable service. The idea doesn't need to be sold; it just needs to be shown that it works.
- The first phase includes Denmark, Finland, Italy, Norway, Poland, and Sweden.



- Key elements of how it works: the student is in the center and initiates the transfer of information. There is an XML standard and data will be sent in XML from the beginning. EMREX is based on open source. It is not an IT system; it is a way of connecting existing systems. As such, there is no central administration and no extra cost involved.
- The system has two components: 1) a student mobility plug-in, which is a kind of web page that students access that will ask for data; and 2) a host-side component where hosts gather achievement records, and deal with format and security.
- A field trial between Norway and Sweden began a few weeks ago. About 50 students have used it, proving that it works. Surveys of students show that first feedback is very positive.
- EMREX is a building block. Once student information is electronic it can be used for multiple purposes, not just international mobility. It can be used to facilitate transfers within a country, and can be used to help with employment.

The Future is Being Made Today! Digital Cross Border Enrollment in Europe

Jan Otten, Policy Advisor, DUO

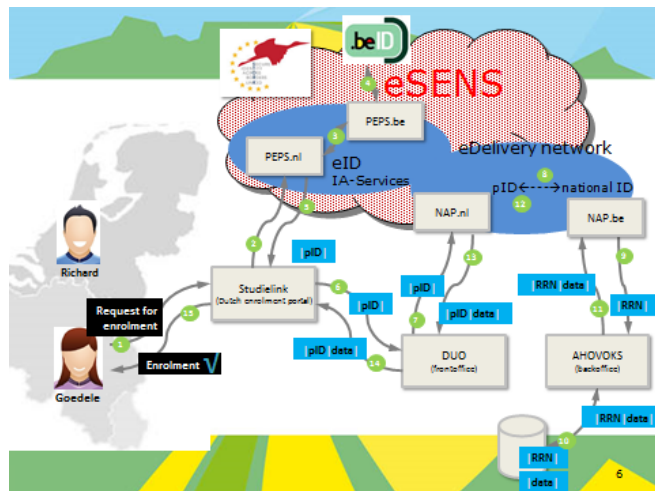
Rik Vercammen, Policy Advisor, AHOVOKS (Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Student Finance)

Session Overview

DUO has already made the higher education enrollment process in the Netherlands 100% digital and is looking to expand its capabilities. Doing so involves creating processes and systems for digital cross-border enrollment, which in the short term involves leveraging the existing “China Connection” architecture. DUO is also looking to expand its digital enrollment to vocational schools and may collaborate with other digital student record initiatives.

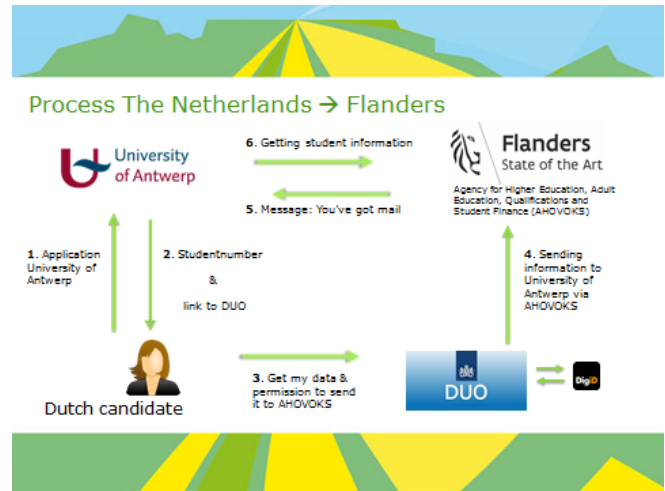
Key Takeaways

- This pilot is using the building stones of eSENS: 1) eID (identification/authentication) and 2) eDelivery: data transport.
- In the Netherlands, the process of enrollment in higher education is now 100% digital, and the desire is to do the same in Belgium.
- For this to happen requires data flowing through a series of connected systems, with authentication along the way.



- The concept makes sense but there are issues related to capacity and the time required to create this solution. So, to make progress quicker, efforts have focused on a temporary solution—termed “the China connection.” This is adopting the architecture that is already working in the Netherlands initiative with China.
- The principles are similar to those outlined in other pilots: students should be able to access their academic data and transfer it whenever and wherever they want.
- The question in the Netherlands/Belgium (Flanders) trial is how to equip students to enroll in higher education without carrying around papers. The process shown below lays out the steps of a Dutch candidate applying to an institution in Belgium. The individual applies, receives

a student number that links to the Dutch system, and provides permission of her data to be sent securely through DUO to the university in Belgium.



- The Netherlands is thinking ahead to elaborate on the process with China, as more universities want to become involved. Changes include going from PDF files to XML and using the China connection with three Flemish universities. Also, there are thoughts of using this connection with universities in other countries, including the United States and United Kingdom.
- DUO has finished a project for employers and will be making information available for all employers in the Netherlands. Other areas of interest include expanding the digital enrollment process for higher education to vocational schools and considering working with EMREX.

Verifdiploma and the French Ministry of Education Project on Digital Authentication

Emmanuel Chomarat, CEO-Owner, Verifdiploma
Mireille Richards, UK Consultant, Verifdiploma

Session Overview

For 15 years Verifdiploma—a private company—has helped provide degree verification and manage student data. In January 2016, the French Ministry of Higher Education announced plans to have a digital platform for storing and providing certification. This project is planned to begin later in 2016.

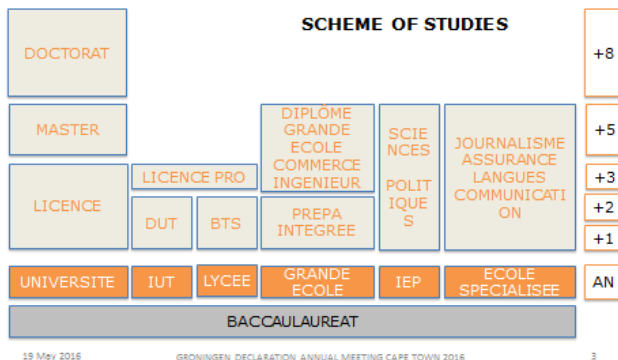
Key Takeaways

- The French higher education landscape is extremely fragmented with free public universities and shorter education options, as well as longer, more elite options like prep schools and business schools. Education ends with baccalaureate.

1 FRENCH HIGHER EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE



Very fragmented



- Verifdiploma is a private company with 15 years of experience in degree verification and managing student data. The company has built a database with data on 4.6 million graduates. Verifdiploma has 361 partnership agreements with French higher education schools of all different types. The company's original objective was to provide employers and recruiters more information and provide information about a student's courses, including the content. As a result, Verifdiploma has a good knowledge of curriculum. The company provides back office tools and procedures to manage the verification process, and complies with France's data protection act.
- Verifdiploma has the support of France's Minister of Higher Education along with numerous major educational organizations.
- Verifdiploma has about 1,000 customers, which are employers in all sectors and industries. Demand for verification service has grown over the past 15 years. About 80% of the company's verifications are in France (which is about 50,000) and 20% are international (about 10,000.) About 8% are fraudulent, with fake degrees.
- Services that Verifdiploma provides include a platform for securely managing requests for degree verification.
- France's Ministry of Education has announced draft overview of a plan for a digital certification of a diploma. It will be a unique PDF only available to a student, sent via email. It will also be made available on a web page.
- Plans are to start with the bacculaureate degree (there are about 600,000 per year) and then look to add two-year technical degrees (110,000 per year). The hope is that access to electronic documents will reduce the request for paper documents (80,000 requests per year).
- Phase 1 is targeted to start in September 2016 and Phase 2 will begin at the end of the 2016-17 academic year. The project will be managed by the government.

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