

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The GDN Network Partners with SAQA to Host 2026 Annual Meeting in Cape Town, South Africa

Cape Town to welcome global leaders advancing digital learner data, skills recognition, and trusted credential ecosystems

May 12, 2026 — The GDN Network, in partnership with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), is pleased to announce that the 2026 GDN Network Annual Meeting will be held in Cape Town, South Africa, marking a return to the city ten years after the GDN Network first convened there in 2016.

Bringing together leaders from government, higher education, technology, and workforce sectors, the GDN Network Annual Meeting is a global convening focused on advancing digital learner data portability, interoperability, and the recognition of skills and credentials across borders. The 2026 meeting, under the theme “*UBUNTU: Stronger Together*”, will continue this mission by fostering international collaboration and dialogue at a time when trusted, learner-centred ecosystems are more critical than ever.

Co-hosted with SAQA, the custodian of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and a key driver in advancing lifelong learning, qualifications recognition, and skills mobility in South Africa and beyond, the meeting also builds on a deep and ongoing collaboration between the organisations, including SAQA’s commitment as a Signatory of the GDN Network and its role within the GDN Network’s Board of Directors. The Cape Town meeting will highlight both regional and global efforts to support recognition and inclusive digital credentialing practices.

“Returning to Cape Town a decade later reflects both how far the GDN Network has come and how important global collaboration remains,” says Joanne Duklas, Executive Director, GDN Network. “Together with SAQA, we are creating a space to explore how digital transformation can better serve learners, workers, and institutions worldwide.”

“The return of the GDN Network to Cape Town is both timely and significant,” says Ms Nadia Starr, SAQA CEO. “As SAQA, we are committed to strengthening trusted, transparent, and interoperable systems that enable the recognition of learning across borders. This convening provides an important platform to advance digital credentialing, support lifelong learning, and ensure that individuals are empowered to have their knowledge and skills recognised globally.”

The 2026 convening will build on the GDN Network’s ongoing [Call to Action](#), which encourages stakeholders across sectors to work collectively toward:

- Empowering individuals with greater control over their educational and skills data
- Advancing interoperable, secure, and trusted digital credential ecosystems
- Supporting lifelong learning pathways through recognition of formal, non-formal, and informal learning
- Strengthening global collaboration to ensure equitable access and mobility

Cape Town, a vibrant cosmopolitan city known for its rich cultural heritage and role as a hub for innovation and education in Africa, provides an ideal setting for these discussions. The meeting will emphasize not only technological advancement but also equity, access, and the inclusion of diverse global perspectives in shaping the future of learner data.

Participants can expect a dynamic program featuring keynote speakers, panel discussions, roundtables, and collaborative sessions focused on emerging trends such as skills-based hiring, micro-credentials, digital wallets, AI and disruptive technologies, and cross-border recognition frameworks.

Registration is now open, and full event details, including dates, venue, program information, and participation options are available on the conference website: <https://groningendeclaration.org/2026-cape-town-south-africa/>

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About the GDN Network: The GDN Network is an international, non-profit federated trust located in the Netherlands. It represents a voluntary network of like-minded organizations and individuals that seek to make digital student data portability happen. Its network of thought leaders from around the globe are collaborators who seek to support, advise, and offer innovative changes in the ways we share artifacts of academic learning. The GDN Network seeks common ground in best serving the academic and professional mobility needs of citizens worldwide by bringing together stakeholders in the digital student data ecosystem. It seeks to develop and support best practices and globally accepted standards for safe and citizen-oriented convenings and information exchanges. Learn more about the GDN Network at: groningendeclaration.org

About the South African Qualifications Authority: The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is the oversight body of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the custodian of its values and quality character. The role of SAQA, as stipulated in the NQF Act, is to advance the objectives of the NQF, oversee the further development and implementation of the NQF, and co-ordinate the Sub-Frameworks. SAQA's functions are set out in section 13 of the NQF Act. Learn more about SAQA at: saqa.org.za

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