



GDN Network Announces Incoming Board Appointments

Incoming appointments bring diverse international perspectives and expertise to support the GDN Network's mission of advancing learner mobility worldwide.

Groningen, Netherlands — July 13, 2026 — The Groningen Declaration Network (GDN Network), the international non-profit organization advancing learner and citizen mobility worldwide, is pleased to announce the appointment of five incoming members to its Board of Directors. The appointments become effective following the Annual Business Meeting held on Friday, October 22, during the [GDN Network Annual Meeting 2026](#) in Cape Town, South Africa.

The newly appointed directors are:

- Joanne Ligouris
- Dr. Mamta Chauhan
- Nadia Starr – Reappointed
- Hennie Bulstra
- Stig Arne Skjerven

Together, these incoming board members bring complementary expertise, diverse perspectives, and global representation that will strengthen the Board's collective leadership. Drawing on experience across higher education, qualifications recognition, quality assurance, digital credentials, skills mobility, governance, international and multilateral cooperation, diplomatic experience, public-sector innovation and substantial relevant networks, they reflect the breadth of the GDN Network's global community. Their appointments reinforce the Network's commitment to inclusive collaboration and to advancing trusted, interoperable approaches to learner data exchange that support mobility worldwide.

"The strength of the GDN Network has always come from the people who bring their expertise, passion, and commitment to our shared mission," says Melanie Gottlieb, President of the GDN Network Board of Directors. "I am delighted to welcome Joanne, Mamta, Nadia (returning), Hennie, and Stig Arne to our Board and to continue working alongside our returning directors. Each of them brings not only exceptional expertise, but also a deep commitment to collaboration, trust, and service to the global community."

Recognizing Our Outgoing Board Members

The GDN Network also extends its gratitude to the outgoing members of the Board of Directors whose terms conclude following the Annual Business Meeting:

- Julie Reddy
- Anthony Manahan
- Jelger de Boer
- Shelby Stanfield



Through their dedication, leadership, and service, these board members have helped guide the organization through a period of growth and increasing global influence. Their contributions have strengthened the Network's governance, expanded its international partnerships, and supported the advancement of digital learner mobility worldwide.

"Serving on the GDN Board, I've had the privilege of seeing the GDN Network grow through the dedication of people who believe in our mission and are willing to contribute their time, expertise, and energy to make it happen," says Jelger de Boer, Past-President of the GDN Network and Chair of the Nominations Committee. "As the Network continues to evolve, it is exciting to welcome a new group of leaders who bring fresh perspectives, a wealth of experience, and a collaborative spirit that reflects the GDN Network's mission. Joanne, Mamta, Nadia, Hennie, and Stig Arne have each been champions of learner mobility and trusted recognition in their own way, and it's a pleasure to extend a warm welcome to them to the Board. I know they will challenge us, inspire us, and help shape the next chapter of impact and innovation for the GDN Network."

Meet Our Incoming Board Members

Joanne Ligouris (Australia)

Academic Registrar and Executive Director, Student and Scholarly Services, The University of Melbourne

Joanne Ligouris serves as Academic Registrar and Executive Director of Student and Scholarly Services, at the University of Melbourne, one of the founding organizations of the GDN Network. She has extensive leadership experience in higher education administration, governance, digital transformation, and student services. Throughout her career, she has championed initiatives that enhance equity, access, and student success through innovative uses of technology, data, and artificial intelligence.

Ligouris is motivated by a belief that every learner should have equitable opportunities to access and benefit from education regardless of their background. She brings strong governance, integrity, risk management, and strategic leadership capabilities and is committed to helping the GDN Network further its mission of supporting student mobility and global citizenship.

Dr. Mamta Chauhan (Australia)

Executive Director, VETASSESS

Dr. Mamta Chauhan is the Executive Director of VETASSESS, Australia's largest skills assessment provider, supporting skills recognition for more than 350 occupations within Australia's skilled migration program. With more than two decades of experience across education, assessment, curriculum development, research, stakeholder engagement, and public policy, she has become a respected leader in the field of skills recognition and workforce mobility.



An active participant in the GDN Network since 2015, Dr. Chauhan has witnessed and contributed to the Network's evolution from a digital credential mobility initiative into a globally recognized platform for dialogue and collaboration on skills recognition, mobility, and cross-border workforce participation. Her motivation for joining the Board is driven by a desire to contribute strategically to GDN's future development while bringing a global perspective on qualifications recognition, workforce participation, and policy alignment. As a migrant herself, she is passionate about helping individuals achieve their skills aspirations and unlock opportunities for professional advancement.

Nadia Starr (South Africa) – Reappointed

Chief Executive Officer, South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)

Nadia Starr returns to the GDN Board following her reappointment. As Chief Executive Officer of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), she leads one of Africa's most influential qualifications and recognition bodies. Her extensive experience includes education and training policy, quality assurance, youth skills development, and leadership and advocacy roles across multiple national organizations.

Starr currently serves in several international leadership roles, including President of the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) Network. She brings a deep commitment to skills and knowledge mobility, strong governance expertise, and a global perspective on qualifications frameworks and recognition systems. Her continued service on the GDN Board will help strengthen connections between the Network and key initiatives across Africa and beyond.

Hennie Bulstra (The Netherlands)

Innovation Lead, Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs (DUO) (Executive Agency of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science)

Hennie Bulstra is a senior policy, strategy, and innovation leader at DUO, the Dutch executive agency responsible for education services and policy implementation. He has extensive experience working at the intersection of digital credentials, innovation, public policy, and international collaboration.

Bulstra has played leadership roles in numerous European and global initiatives, including serving as co-convenor of the European Blockchain Partnership's Diplomas and Credentials User Group, contributing to the European Digital Identity Wallet framework, supporting the DC4EU large-scale pilot, and advising international organizations including the OECD. He is the co-founder of DIT-lab: Discover Innovations of Tomorrow. He is motivated by a desire to help shape and implement the GDN Network's strategic vision to be the leading global Network for the trusted exchange of learning outcomes and credentials and facilitating mobility worldwide. His expertise in innovation, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning will help position the Network for future growth and impact.

Stig Arne Skjerven (Norway)



Chair, UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education

Stig Arne Skjerven is a globally recognized leader in international higher education policy. His appointment is directly connected to his role as the inaugural Chair of the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education (2023–2027), following his prior involvement in its development and implementation. He has also twice been elected Chair of the ENIC Bureau under the Lisbon Recognition Convention and has played a pivotal role in developing the Qualifications Passport for Refugees initiatives led by the Council of Europe and UNESCO.

Skjerven brings extensive experience in multilateral diplomacy, recognition of qualifications, quality assurance, micro-credentials, strategic communication, and global partnerships. His motivation for joining the Board stems from a long-standing commitment to advancing international recognition frameworks and supporting trusted systems that facilitate learner and workforce mobility across borders.

Strengthening Global Collaboration and Mobility

The newly appointed directors represent a diverse mix of geographic regions, professional backgrounds, and stakeholder perspectives from higher education, qualifications authorities, government agencies, and skills recognition organizations. Together, they will help guide the implementation of the GDN Network's strategic priorities, strengthen relationships with global partners, support the development of trusted standards and practices, and advance innovative approaches to digital learner data portability.

As the global landscape for education, skills, and employment continues to evolve, the Board will work collaboratively to ensure that learners, institutions, employers, and governments benefit from secure, interoperable, and learner-centered systems that enable mobility across borders and throughout lifelong learning pathways.

The GDN Network looks forward to working with its new Board of Directors as it continues its mission of building trust, fostering collaboration, and advancing the global exchange of learner skills, credentials, and achievements.

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.

Media Contacts

Joanne Duklas, Executive Director, GDN Network, execdir@groningendeclaration.org

Maya Hardy, Outreach Lead, GDN Network, outreach@groningendeclaration.org