GDN Network Announces New Leadership Appointments and Governance Updates

New appointments strengthen global leadership across the Board of Directors, Executive Committee, and Strategic Advisory Council.

Groningen, Netherlands, November 26, 2026 – The Groningen Declaration Network (GDN Network) is pleased to announce a series of leadership appointments and governance updates following its Annual Business Meeting held during the GDN Network Annual Meeting 2026 in Cape Town, South Africa.

These leadership updates include the appointment of a new President, and appointments to the Strategic Advisory Council, and Executive Committee. The announcement also recognizes several longstanding contributors whose service has helped shape the growth and impact of the GDN Network.

Together, these leaders bring extensive expertise across higher education, qualifications recognition, learner mobility, digital credentials, workforce development, governance, and international cooperation, while building on the strong foundation established by those who have served the Network in previous leadership and advisory roles.

As the global landscape for education and workforce mobility continues to evolve, these appointments reinforce the GDN Network's commitment to advancing trusted, interoperable, and learner-centered approaches to the exchange and recognition of skills and learner achievements worldwide.

Leadership Transition

The GDN Network is pleased to announce that Charmaine Hack has assumed the role of President of the GDN Network.

Hack succeeds Melanie Gottlieb, who now transitions into the role of Past President following her term of service. During her presidency, Gottlieb helped guide the Network through a period of growth and strengthened international engagement, and advanced the global conversation on trusted digital credentials and learner mobility.

"*I am deeply grateful to the Board of Directors, the Strategic Advisory Council, the past presidents of the GDN Network, and the GDN Executive Director, Joanne Duklas. Through their leadership, the Network has matured into a strong and respected global community with a clear strategic direction,*" said **Charmaine Hack, President of the GDN Network and Vice President, Partnerships, Enrolment and External Relations, Centennial College.**

"*As the new President, I am grateful for the continuity, growth, and evolution that have brought us to this point. I look forward to building on this strong foundation and continuing the momentum toward an even stronger organization working in partnership with the Board, the Executive Director, the GDN Support Team, and the GDN global community.*"

"*It has been my pleasure, honor, and privilege to serve as the GDN President over the past two years,*" said **Melanie Gottlieb, Past President of the GDN Network and Executive Director at American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (AACRAO).** "*I am pleased to pass the baton to Charmaine Hack, who will be leading the organization over the next two years. I have every confidence that under her leadership, the GDN Network will continue to grow, innovate, and strengthen its global impact.*"

The GDN Network extends its sincere appreciation to Melanie Gottlieb for her leadership, dedication, and contributions to the global community during her term as President.

New Board of Directors Members

The GDN welcomes the following individuals to its Board of Directors:

- Joanne Ligouris, Academic Registrar and Executive Director, Student and Scholarly Services, University of Melbourne
- Dr. Mamta Chauhan, Executive Director, VETASSESS
- Hennie Bulstra, Innovation Lead and senior advisor Policy and Strategy, Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs (DUO) - He is stepping down from his position on the GDN Strategic Advisory Council to take on this new Board role.
- Stig Arne Skjerven, Chair, UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education
- Nadia Starr, Acting Director-General, Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), reappointed

The Board plays a critical role in guiding GDN's strategic direction and supporting its mission to improve digital learner data portability, recognition, and mobility worldwide.

A complete list of Board members is available on the GDN website: Board of Directors https://groningendeclaration.org/organisation/

Strategic Advisory Council Welcomes New Members

The Strategic Advisory Council has also reorganized with the appointment of four distinguished leaders bringing expertise from education, technology, quality assurance, and student advocacy:

- Melissa Loble, Chief Academic Officer, Instructure

- Dr. Rooksana Rajab, Director, Resonance Consulting Services
- Divine Edem Kwadzodeh, Secretary General, All-Africa Students Union (AASU)
- Dr. Julie Reddy, former Professor of Practice, University of Johannesburg

The Council provides strategic guidance on emerging trends, global developments, and opportunities that support GDN's mission and long-term impact.

Learn more about the Strategic Advisory Council: Strategic Advisory Council https://groningendeclaration.org/advisory-council/

Executive Committee Appointments

The GDN Network is pleased to announce the following Executive Committee appointments:

- Charmaine Hack - GDN President; also serves as Vice President, Partnerships, Enrolment and External Relations, Centennial College
- Melanie Gottlieb - GDN Past President; also serves as Executive Director, AACRAO
- Beka Tavartkiladze - GDN Vice President; also serves as the Senior Director of Global Education and Knowledge, World Education Services
- Dr. Keiko Ikeda - GDN Board Secretary; also serves as Vice-Director, IIGE, Professor, Kansai University, Kansai University Institute of Innovative Global Education
- Luis Alberto López Monreal - GDN Board Treasurer; also serves as Director of Regulations and Academic Management, Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (Tecnológico de Monterrey)

The Executive Committee plays a key role in supporting the governance, strategic priorities, and ongoing development of the GDN Network. Bringing extensive experience in international education, credential recognition, higher education leadership, and organizational governance, these leaders will help guide the Network as it continues to strengthen trusted learner mobility and digital credential ecosystems worldwide.

Strengthening Global Collaboration and Mobility

The newly appointed leaders represent a diverse mix of regions, institutions, and professional backgrounds spanning higher education, government, technology, qualifications authorities, student advocacy organizations, and workforce development.

Together and alongside the GDN Executive Director, Joanne Duklas, they will help guide the implementation of the GDN Network's strategic priorities, strengthen partnerships across sectors and regions, and support innovative approaches to trusted recognition and learner data portability.

As digital credentials, skills recognition, and lifelong learning become increasingly important to learners and workers around the world, the GDN Network looks forward to working with its new leadership team to advance collaboration, trust, and mobility across borders.

Honouring Outgoing Leaders

The GDN Board, Executive Director, and Support Team extend warm thanks to those who are rolling off the Board and Council. Each person has and continues to contribute extensively to the GDN mission with some taking on new roles in this next phase.

Please join us in thanking them for their service.

- **Jelger de Boer** - Recipient of the 2026 GDN Ambassador Award, he is moving from Past President of the board into an advisory role, helping, along with the GDN Executive Director, to establish the GDN as an ANBI, a charitable status for organizations in the Netherlands and with administrative supports including with board transition registrations with the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce.

- **Dr. Julie Reddy** - Recipient of the 2026 GDN Ambassador Award, she will continue in an advisory role in her new position as a member of the GDN Strategic Advisory Board.

- **Anthony Manahan** - Recipient of the 2026 GDN Ambassador Award, he will become part of the broader outreach community, advocating for and representing the GDN under this new status.

- **Shelby Stanfield** - He will be rolling off the board after two years of service and is a long time contributor to the credentialing ecosystem.

- **Janie Barnett** - 2025 Recipient of the GDN Ambassador Award, will be finishing her term on the Council and continuing to support the GDN as it builds its new online showcase history wall.

- **Simone Ravaioli** - 2022 Recipient of the GDN Ambassador Award, who continues his good work for the GDN, including as a recent main partner and lead for the GDN's first Decolonizing Recognition half day event that ran during the Cape Town conference week in October 2026.

- **Victoriano Giralt -** He is concluding his term on the Strategic Advisory Council after two years and a long-standing commitment to leadership and service within the organization.

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About the Groningen Declaration Network (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: www.groningendeclaration.org

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