



Farewell to Manual Processes:

Embrace Efficient and Enhanced Credentials Management (SEA)



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Executive Summary

South East Asian Institutions Recognise the Need To Modernise Credential Management

In the higher education landscape, relying solely on manual credential management is becoming outdated and inefficient. Institutions are under mounting pressure to upgrade their processes, driven by the need for greater accessibility, automation, and a global shift toward digitisation. This white paper explores the urgency for transformation in credential management and the growing importance of adopting digital solutions.

Here are the key takeaways you can expect:



Manual credential management is becoming burdensome, pushing institutions toward modernisation.



Digital credential management systems enhance security, reduce costs, and offer scalable solutions.



The drive for digital transformation in education is driven by market demands for online access to credentials and badges, as opposed to paper.



Adopting best practices for digital credentialing can streamline operations and set the stage for long-term success.



Instant verification and seamless sharing of credentials are crucial in the current skills-based job market.



Moving to digital systems requires careful planning and alignment with institutional goals.

Introduction

Transforming Credential Management: Meeting the Demands of the Digital Age

Digital credentials are transforming the way learners showcase their achievements, offering a more dynamic and shareable way to verify skills and knowledge. Unlike traditional paper degrees, digital credentials are easily issued, verified, and managed, allowing for greater adaptability in educational and career pathways. These credentials empower learners to take control of their lifelong learning journeys, making it simpler to demonstrate their qualifications in a skills-based employment landscape.

Because efficient, secure, and easily accessible credentials are critical today, clinging to outdated and manual methods of managing academic credentials in higher education can hold institutions back – ultimately doing the same to its students.

Today, the European Union's SHARE programme is partnering with universities across the ASEAN region to **accelerate the digital transformation of higher education**.¹ This initiative aims to enhance online student exchanges through:

- **Digital credentials**
- **Virtual exchanges**
- **Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL).**²

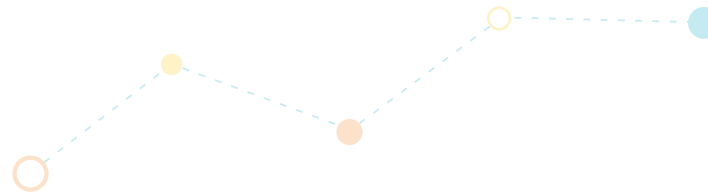
Adopting digital credential management is not just a smart choice; it's essential for modernising operations, safeguarding an institution's reputation, and meeting the high expectations of today's students and employers.

¹ <https://asem-education.org/initiatives/31-eu-share-project-higher-education-in-asean-region/>
² <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20220215170723502>

What Are Credentials and Why Do They Matter?

Credentials are official documents or digital records that confirm and validate an individual's academic achievements, qualifications, and skills. Unlike traditional qualifications, credentials vary in size, complexity, and duration. They also come in several forms, from diplomas and certificates to transcripts, badges, and more – each showcasing and authenticating achievements in its own way.

The Value of Digital Credentials Today



Efficiently managed credentials have the immense potential to:

- **Ensure authenticity:** Credentials confirm the authenticity of academic and professional records, maintaining trust and integrity.
- **Facilitate student mobility:** They provide a standardised way to assess and compare qualifications, making it easier for learners to move across different educational systems.
- **Enhance employability:** By offering a clear measure of skills and achievements, credentials boost employability in diverse professional contexts.
- **Support regulatory compliance:** They help institutions meet regulatory and accreditation standards, boosting credibility.
- **Attract prospective learners:** High-quality credentials reflect a commitment to innovation for an enhanced learner experience, helping to market the institution and drive prospective learners.
- **Enable secure digital sharing:** Credentials can be shared efficiently and securely across platforms like LinkedIn, streamlining processes and reinforcing a positive institutional reputation.

The Current State of Credentials and Credential Management

It's still uncommon for higher education institutions in the ASEAN region to use digital documents for regulating mobility and recognition. When they do, it's often limited to traditional methods like spreadsheets, paper-based systems, and physical document management – rather than true computer-readable formats.³

Unfortunately, these approaches come with drawbacks that hinder the seamless digital experience students expect. Most notably, they can expose sensitive information to security risks, lead to labour-intensive processes that cause delays, and increase the chance of losing or damaging physical records.

Outdated methods also fall short of providing students with instantly shareable credentials, which are crucial for enhancing employability in a competitive job market. In fact, digital technology is now being leveraged for **skills-based development** in education across Southeast Asia today – with SEAMEO's Strategic Plan 2021-2030 prioritising **digital transformation** and a **rapid adoption of change**.⁴

Consequently, higher education institutions face calls to modernise. This ensures they're equipped to boost efficiency, ease staff workloads, and meet the expectations of today's tech-savvy students.

³ https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Digital-Credential-Recognition_Mapping-and-Identification-of-Digital-Credit-Transfer-System-Needs-in-ASEAN_02.2022.pdf

⁴ <https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/2023-southeast-asia>

The Challenges of Relying on Manual Processes

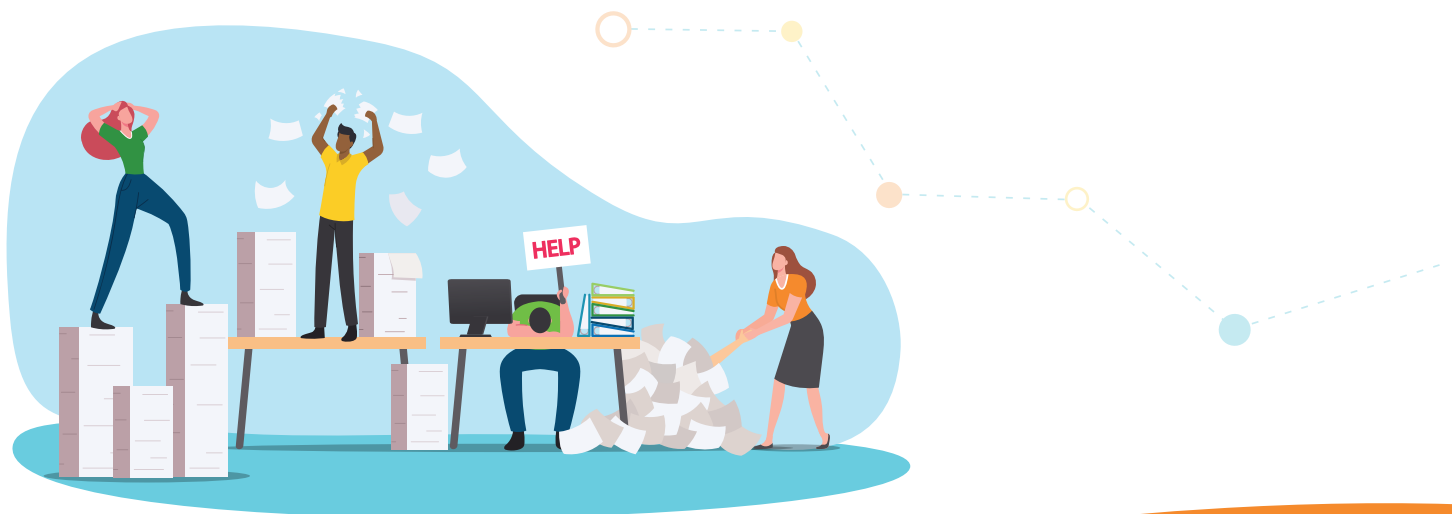
While governments in Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Singapore are increasingly supporting digital credentialing, they're each at different stages of development. Meanwhile, Malaysia and Thailand have pockets of expertise in private institutions, but Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos have yet to develop initiatives in this area.

When it comes to credential management, manual processes limit what further education schools can achieve. Much like RMIT University, which struggled with damaged and returned prints becoming a budget and resource issue, many institutions face the dual challenges of time-consuming manual processes and an increasing demand for digital solutions.



Case Study: To simplify academic credentialing, RMIT University embraced My eEquals powered by Parchment*, saving \$830,000 a year and cutting down on waste. Students can now access secure, tamper-proof digital credentials instantly – making it easier than ever to share their achievements. By streamlining processes and boosting staff productivity, RMIT has created a more efficient and user-friendly experience for students and alumni alike. **Read the full story.**

**My eEquals is the official digital credential platform for tertiary education in Australia and New Zealand, powered by Parchment. It's a collaboration with universities and the Higher Education Standards (HES) governing body, providing secure, digital credentialing for students.*



Here is a closer look at the major challenges institutions face when sticking to traditional methods:



Data Security and Privacy Concerns

Manual processes often expose institutions to breaches and unauthorised access, making it challenging to comply with personal data protection regulations. This jeopardises sensitive learner information – such as email addresses, personal home address details, and other private data – and can seriously damage institutional trust.



Time-Consuming and Error-Prone

Manual data entry is not only slow but also prone to mistakes, increasing the administrative workload and the risk of inaccuracies. This inefficiency can delay crucial processes and diminish the effectiveness of credential management – not to mention raise operational costs.



Inefficient Data Storage and Retrieval

Relying on spreadsheets for student data means risking total loss if the file crashes, while storing digital documents in folders eats up space and slows down retrieval. Accessing crucial records this way becomes a frustrating and time-consuming task.



The Risks of Outdated Tools in Credential Management

Sticking with outdated tools like spreadsheets and physical documents creates a host of data management issues, compliance headaches, and operational inefficiencies. These problems underscore the need for modern systems to streamline and secure credential management.

Drivers of Digital Transformation in the Academic Market

With 400 million internet users, South East Asia is rapidly adopting digital technology in education, with more learning platforms emerging and digital credentials reshaping higher education.⁵ And governments are advancing this digital transformation through initiatives such as open universities and the formal recognition of micro-credentials.

Several key factors are fueling the shift toward these digital practices:

Pandemic Push: The COVID-19 pandemic was a major catalyst for digital transformation in education, leading institutions to adapt to remote learning and enhance flexibility and accessibility.

Addressing Global Challenges: Beyond the pandemic, digital transformation helps solve major global education challenges like improving access, cutting administrative costs, enhancing quality, and managing larger class sizes.

Trend Toward Digitisation: Southeast Asian countries are driving the digitisation of higher education with supportive regulations, bold initiatives, and innovative use of digital technologies. Strategic plans like Malaysia's Higher Education Blueprint and Vietnam's Digital Transformation Program highlight the region's dedication to modernising education and expanding access through cutting-edge digital solutions.⁶

Industry Demand for Digital Credentials: As more learners pursue digital education and remote job opportunities, the demand for verifiable digital credentials has skyrocketed. At the same time, 89% of employers believe digital credentials will be critical in higher education, complementing traditional qualifications and playing a key role in entry-level jobs across major industries.⁷

Growing Emphasis on Lifelong Learning: Modern digital tools support continuous skill development, which is becoming essential in today's fast-paced workforce. Institutions that embrace these changes can improve their reputation and attract more learners.

⁵ <https://www.enetosh.net/good-practice-reader/global-education-monitoring-report-2023-southeast-asia-technology-in-education-a-tool-on-whose-terms.html>

⁶ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387214>

⁷ <https://www.adb.org/news/digital-skills-critical-jobs-asia-and-pacific-says-adb-linkedin-report>

What Is a Credential Management System?

With increasing demands for modernisation and digital credentials, higher education institutions are turning to digital credential management systems for support. These secure platforms enable institutions to create, store, verify, and share digital credentials – reducing the inefficiencies of manual processes and helping to drive digital transformation.

What are the key features of a credential management system?



With **75% of employers** struggling to find candidates with the right capabilities, digital credentials play a vital role in bridging the skills gap.⁸

- **Digital issuance:** Say goodbye to paper documents and manual processes – digital credentials make issuing documents faster and more efficient.
- **Secure storage:** Safeguard important records with secure digital storage that keeps credentials safe from loss, damage, or unauthorised access.
- **Streamlined verification:** Verify credentials instantly, reducing the risk of fraud and cutting down on time-consuming manual checks.

Plus, digital credentials can be easily shared on social media, boosting visibility, engagement, and even employability.

“We were able to streamline our processes for everybody, so, when you complete, no matter who you are, onshore or offshore, whatever type of student you are, you will get a completion transcript in Parchment.”

– Mirna Bitar, Associate Director, Completions, Awards and Graduations at RMIT University

⁸ <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/asia-pacific/hope-and-fears/2023/asia-pacific-hopes-and-fears-survey.pdf>

What Are the Benefits of a Digital Credential Management System?

Digital credentials provide a richer, more detailed record of achievements compared to traditional grades and can be shared more widely than academic transcripts. An effective credentialing management strategy not only supports learners' personal identity but also enhances their social engagement.

The advantages extend beyond learners – explore how digital credential management benefits multiple educational stakeholders as institutions embrace this modern approach:

- 1. Enhanced Data Security and Compliance:** Advanced security measures like encryption and access controls safeguard sensitive information and ensure compliance with PDP regulations across Southeast Asia.
- 2. Improved Efficiency and Time Savings:** Automation streamlines administrative tasks, cutting down on workload and costs so staff can focus more on supporting students.
- 3. Greater Accuracy and Reliability:** Digital systems reduce errors and enhance data integrity, making sure credentials are accurate and reliable.
- 4. Scalability and Flexibility:** These systems grow with your needs and adapt to changing demands, making them suitable for institutions of any size.
- 5. Better User Experience:** Streamlined processes and improved accessibility make interactions smoother for both learners and teachers.

“A great benefit was the reduction in all the paper we printed. Each year we had over 2000 documents returned to us...that isn't true any longer due to Parchment Digitaly Services.”

– Mirna Bitar, Associate Director, Completions, Awards and Graduations at RMIT University

- 6. Improved Student Recruitment:** Digital credentials showcase modern educational offerings, attracting more prospective students.
- 7. Industry Collaboration and Workforce Alignment:** Recognised digital credentials boost employability by aligning with industry standards and needs.
- 8. Cost Savings:** Digitisation reduces expenses related to physical credential production and administrative overhead.
- 9. Enhanced Institutional Reputation:** Embracing modern practices elevates your institution's image and appeal.
- 10. Student Mobility and Connectivity:** With digital credentials at play, Southeast Asian higher education institutions can improve credit transfer and harmonisation, ultimately supporting student mobility.⁹



⁹ https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/The-State-of-Higher-Education-in-Southeast-Asia_11.2022.pdf

Choosing a Credential Management System and Best Practices for Implementation

To ensure smooth, secure, and efficient operations, it is crucial to find a credential management system tailored to your unique needs. The right solution not only streamlines processes but also empowers your institution to stay ahead in today's fast-paced educational landscape – allowing both learners and staff to thrive.

Consider the following key factors to find a solution that fits your needs and goals:



Core features: Ensure the system offers digital issuance, secure storage, and streamlined verification for efficient credential management.



Cost: Consider both upfront costs and ongoing expenses like maintenance and support.



Scalability: Choose a platform that can grow with your institution's needs.



Integration: Ensure compatibility with existing systems like your Student Information System (SIS) and Learning Management System (LMS) to avoid workflow disruptions.



User-friendliness: Opt for an intuitive interface that is easy for both staff and learners to use effectively.

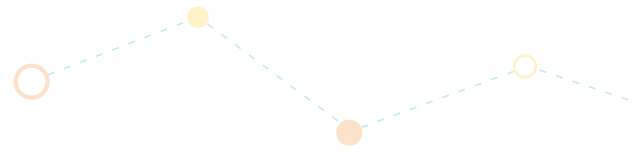
Best Practices for Implementation

You have selected the right solution and a trusted provider – what comes next? Here are the best practices for implementing a credential management system effectively:

- 1. Plan Deployment:** Create a detailed rollout plan with clear goals and timelines to ensure a smooth transition and keep things running seamlessly.
- 2. Engage Stakeholders:** Involve administrators, faculty, and IT staff in the planning and implementation process to align the system with institutional needs and secure their support.
- 3. Provide Training:** Offer comprehensive training for all users, including hands-on workshops and ongoing support, to help them get the most out of the new system.
- 4. Manage Data Migration:** Carefully plan and execute data migration to ensure accurate transfer and integration of existing data without any hiccups or loss.
- 5. Monitor and Adjust:** Regularly assess the system's performance and gather user feedback to make necessary adjustments and improve functionality along the way.

"Parchment is a tool we now can't live without. It's critical and greatly saves us time in issuing documents, leading to a faster and better student and graduate experience."

– Mirna Bitar, Associate Director, Completions, Awards and Graduations at RMIT University



Conclusion

Embrace the Future of Credential Management With Parchment

As higher education institutions recognise the limitations of sticking with outdated manual processes, digital credential management emerges as more than just a trend; it is a necessary shift to keep up with the demands of the digital age.

That is where Parchment comes in. As a leading player in credential management, Parchment Digitary Services can transform how you handle academic credentials. Here is how the platform adds value:

Streamline Processes: Efficiently certify, issue, accept, and verify academic credentials and digital badges – making your life easier.

Reduce Workload and Costs: Cut down on tedious administrative tasks and save money.

Boost Security: Enjoy advanced security protocols to keep sensitive information safe from unauthorised access.

Simplify Integration: Integrate seamlessly with your existing SIS for a smooth transition.

Ensure Global Accessibility: Let learners access and showcase their achievements securely – anytime, anywhere.

Support Lifelong Learning: Foster continuous educational and professional growth across students' unique learning journeys.

Embrace the future with Parchment and say farewell to cumbersome manual processes. That way, you can focus on what truly matters – improving educational outcomes and supporting student success.

Book a demo and start your transition to a smarter, more secure credential management system today!

Sources

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