



A spring 2019 message sent to the community regarding the recently launched Blockchain credentialing consortium that includes one of the Canadian universities – May 2019

Several colleagues in jurisdictions across Canada have been asking questions of the [ARUCC Groningen & Student Mobility Project](#) team regarding the recently launched blockchain credentialing research consortium involving nine international universities including the University of Toronto. The following is a note from Charmaine Hack, chair of the Project Steering Committee.

Greetings,

This type of research dovetails nicely with the Groningen initiative - in fact, it carries the momentum forward! The initiative is not directly tied to the national student data exchange network led by ARUCC, however, we have spoken with UofT, MIT, and Monterrey to learn more about their work. While blockchain is quickly evolving as a must-have for providing students access to their credentials on their mobile phones, it doesn't solve the bigger issues around student mobility, institutional efficiencies, and creating trusted connections through official student data exchange that a Canadian national network aims to address.

While in Puebla, Mexico in May 2019 attending the 2019 Groningen Summit, a few of us on the ARUCC Groningen & Student Mobility Steering Committee met with representatives from Monterrey. These discussions, in addition to prior conversations with MIT, clarified that while this initiative does put credentials in the hands of students, post-secondary institutions will still have to verify the official status of documents directly with home institutions or central government mandated credential repositories for the purpose of admissions and other official needs.

According to MIT and Monterrey, this initiative doesn't replace other transcript sharing workflows including creating a national level network. For example, Monterrey is working on a national network, just as we are, to support verification of official transcripts in addition to providing viewing access to a student's credential via the blockchain. National networks are also needed because blockchain doesn't allow for data processing capacity, i.e. there is no capacity for downloading student data to facilitate institutional efficiencies or automation; it doesn't solve the gap of no international connectivity to regions such as China and India; and, it requires a key management help desk concept to deal with users who misplace their keys. Remember, documents from different institutions are assigned a separate key and students and other users may have to keep track of *multiple* keys. If they lose their keys, the institution must revoke and re-issue the credential again i.e., go through the entire process with the student again. This is a challenge not yet solved in an efficient manner by any blockchain initiative we have seen so far.



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For now, blockchain may help students transition to the workplace, but it won't solve existing PSI gaps evident across Canada. For more information on the considerations related to blockchain, we invite you to review the attached short paper prepared by Andy Dowling, CEO of Digitary and the provider of the Australian and New Zealand My eQuals credentialing system:

http://www.arucc.ca/uploads/Digitary_Blockchain_Paper_FINAL_June_2018.pdf

[A national hub](#) would essentially tether the range of initiatives emerging across Canada by providing a nationally and globally recognized one-stop for the exchange of academic and professional qualifications and credentials. Enabling the mobility of Canadian citizens and incoming international students is best achieved by grassroots institutional and collaborative-institutional initiatives AND a national network that ties it all together under a single, recognizable and trusted exchange ecosystem.

Warm regards to all,
Charmaine Hack
Chair, Project Steering Committee
Former president, ARUCC (2016-2018)
Registrar, Ryerson University