Parchment
Award

Farewell to Manual Processes:

Embrace Efficient & Enhanced Credentials Issuance and Management

CERTIFICATE

TRANSCRIPT

3.2

DIPLOMA

CLR

VERIFICATION

Parchment
By Instructure

Table of Contents:

Executive Summary

UK 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In the higher education landscape, relying solely on manual credential management is becoming outdated and inefficient.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 incorporating 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.

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

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

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

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Because efficient, secure, and easily accessible credentials are critical today, clinging to outdated and manual methods of managing academic credentials in higher education can hold institutions back — ultimately doing the same to their students.

As institutions face increasing pressure to improve security, ensure compliance, and offer seamless access to credentials, this trend is set to grow.[1]

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

In 2022, around 21% of higher education institutions in the UK adopted digital credentials.

1 https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/state-digital-credentials-2022-review-danny-king

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.

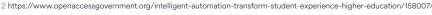# The Current State of Credentials and Credential Management

Many higher education institutions still depend on outdated legacy systems that require excessive manual input, burdening staff and reducing operational efficiency.[2] This often involves traditional methods like spreadsheets, paper-based systems, and physical document management.

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.

When the American University in Cairo (AUC), for example, continued to use paper-based document processes, learners grew increasingly frustrated. "Students encountered delays that lasted weeks and uncertainty with documentation lost in the mail."

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, 96% of learners who earned a digital credential consider it **valuable for their career,** and 78% believe it **increases their chances of getting a job offer.**[3]

Consequently, higher education institutions face calls to modernise. The AUC is just one of many that realised "it was a necessity to move forward with digital credentials." This ensures they are equipped to boost efficiency, ease staff workloads, and meet the expectations of today's tech-savvy students.

2 https://www.openaccessgovernment.org/intelligent-automation-transform-student-experience-higher-education/158007/
3 https://www.accredible.com/reports/2024-state-of-credentialing

Parchment
By Instructure

The Challenges of Relying on Manual Processes

While **77%** of higher education instructors believe digital transformation is crucial, only **37%** of institutions have fully transitioned from paper forms to digital, and just **38%** have upgraded their student information systems (SIS).[4]

When it comes to credential management, manual processes limit what further education schools can achieve. Much like the American College of Greece, which struggled with "tedious paper record management processes [that] occupied too much staff time," many institutions encounter the dual challenges of time-consuming manual processes and a growing demand for digital solutions.

Case Study: The American College of Greece transformed its tedious paper record system by partnering with Parchment, streamlining processes and enhancing student access. The pandemic underscored the need for digital records, and Parchment's seamless integration with Jenzabar enabled a quick transition. Now, students enjoy instant access to transcripts, while staff reclaim valuable time that was once lost to manual tasks. Read the full story.

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 regulations like GDPR. This jeopardises sensitive learner information — such as email addresses, personal home address details, and other private data — and can seriously damage institutional trust.

4 https://www.adobe.com/content/dam/dx-dc/pdf/ue/education-digital-transformation-ue.pdf

Operational and Logistical Concerns

Manual credential management drains time and resources with printing errors, lost shipments, and complex international returns. Physical storage slows access, and misplaced documents add frustration, resulting in higher costs and delayed student access to essential credentials.

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

As the challenges and complexity of print operations and logistics grow, the pendulum is swinging toward digitalization. Currently, **77% of institutions** consider paperless operations essential, with **85%** expected to prioritise these efforts in the next five years.[5]

As educational institutions shift toward digital practices, several key factors are fueling the drive for modernisation:

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: The education sector is embracing automation to streamline operations, though only 12% of UK higher education decision-makers feel their digital transformation is fully successful.[5] Although this figure is relatively low, it is steadily climbing as institutions develop digital strategies to stay competitive and serve students better.

Industry Demand for Digital Credentials: As more learners pursue digital education and remote job opportunities, the demand for verifiable digital credentials has skyrocketed. With 90% of learners agreeing that an entry-level professional certificate helps them stand out, digital credentials are seen as vital for employability.[6]

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://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/uk/pdf/2024/06/digital-transformation-in-higher-education-the-challenges.pdf
6 https://www.coursera.org/campus/resources/ebooks/industry-micro-credentials/

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. While some manual steps — like downloading reports, IT support, and data transfers — may still be required, these secure platforms enable institutions to create, store, verify, and share digital credentials with ease. This digital transformation step helps reduce the inefficiencies of manual processes.

What are the key features of a credential management system?

3.2

With **95% of executives** reporting challenges in finding skilled employees, digital credentials play a vital role in bridging the skills gap.[7]

- **Digital issuance:** Combine manual processes with digital credentials to 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.

"The electronic version is always available for our students. Students can download them and share them when they like, which makes Parchment Digitary Services a much more accessible system.

— Vivi Consta, Registrar, The American College of Greece

7 https://www.roberthalf.com/us/en/insights/research/why-and-how-companies-need-to-start-developing-tech-talent-for-the-future-of-work#

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 regulations like GDPR and FERPA.

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.

> *"The main benefit is that documents used to take a minimum of a week to reach the destination. With Parchment Digitary Services, it's instant.*
>
> – Maha Mostafa, Manager of Registrar Operations at AUC

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. **Future-Proofing:** Preparing your institution for future digital advancements and regulatory changes supports lifelong learning journeys. Plus, with over 55% of learners interested in earning professional certificates that count toward their degree, digital credential management systems offer institutions a strategic advantage.6

11. **A zero-cost/revenue-generating model:** Funds credential management through learner fees, reducing expenses, streamlining operations, and enhancing the learner experience—all without additional financial strain.

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.

Parchment
Award

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
By Instructure

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's where Parchment comes in. As a leader in credential management, Parchment Digitary Services helps institutions navigate the evolving landscape, balancing both print and digital needs. This reduces the risks and costs of print logistics while offering a customer-centric digital alternative.

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.

"When we launched Parchment Digitary Services, it was like a dream come true.
– Vivi Consta, Registrar at the American College of Greece

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

1. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/state-digital-credentials-2022-review-danny-king

2. https://www.openaccessgovernment.org/intelligent-automation-transform-student-

3. https://www.accredible.com/reports/2024-state-of-credentialing

4. https://www.adobe.com/content/dam/dx-dc/pdf/ue/education-digital-transformation-ue.pdf

5. https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/uk/pdf/2024/06/digital-transformation-in-higher-education-the-challenges.pdf

6. https://www.coursera.org/campus/resources/ebooks/industry-micro-credentials/

7. https://www.roberthalf.com/us/en/insights/research/why-and-how-companies-need-to-start-developing-tech-talent-for-the-future-of-work#