CDSL to safeguard mark sheets and other important certificates

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Prajeet Nair
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The government of India nominated CDSL to operate the National Academic Depository (NAD) which will hold academic awards like mark sheets, degree certificates, diploma certificates, provisional certificate, skill certificates, transcripts, convocation certificates, and transfer certificates, issued by academic institutions (AIs).

The Finance Minister of India, in his budget speech 2016, announced that they will be setting up an Academic Depository on the pattern of a Securities Depository. The Govt. of India under the aegis of Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and the University Grants Commission (UGC) subsequently nominated CDSL Ventures Limited (CVL) to operate the National Academic Depository (NAD) which would be used to hold academic awards like mark sheets, convocation certificates, and transfer certificates, issued by Academic Institutions (AIs).

The experience of CDSL running a securities depository for nearly 20 years was considered relevant while deciding to award the academic depository project. The President of India formally inaugurated the project on July 9, 2017 in New Delhi. The NAD project is planned to cover around 1500 Institutions which constitute 40,000 colleges.

Unique platform, globally first initiative

NAD is probably the first of its kind in the world and provides a platform which is likely to be emulated in other countries. This initiative brings together institutions at disparate levels of IT maturity to participate in the national digital academic depository ecosystem.

"Under the government's Digital India initiative, the NAD project will make it mandatory for all Academic Institutions to participate in the dematerialization of student academic records and enable authentic electronic verification of the same by institutions, employers, and other verification agencies. The important thing about this project is that the certificate/award data that is available on the platform is digitally signed and pre-verified. The verifiers can download/peruse the record and treat the same as verified after the student has given his consent and the verification fees have been paid through the payment gateway. This solves a lot of headache for verifiers like employers, background checkers, academic institutions, banks, visa consulates, and other domestic and overseas evaluation bodies." says Joydeep Dutta, executive director and group CTO, CDSL.

The entire verification request process, namely request by verification agency, consent by a student, payment for verification services and showing the final image to the verifier can be achieved in minutes which could take up to a month if the verifier is in another location and more if in another country. Moreover, the student is able to view all his academic records in one platform.

This facilitates near-total elimination of fake and forged awards. There is no risk of loss of physical awards since the same is available online and there is no need to attest copies. Also, this reduces storage and manpower requirements of academic institutions, and provides a unified platform for grievance lodging and redressal.

Academic institutions need not invest in high end IT infrastructure and software, and have their systems available 24x7 and internet facing. Therefore, cyber security compliance is less of a worry to the academic institution since it is taken care by the depository.

"Nearly 200 academic Institutions are in various stages of uploading / updating awards in the electronic form in the NAD system," says Dutta.

http://www.cio.in/case-study/cdsl-safeguard-mark-sheets-and-other-important-certificates