Software licences and digital certificates

■ Software licenses

A **software license** is a document that provides legally binding guidelines for the use and distribution of software. It provides the users with the right to one or more copies of the software without violating copyrights, defines the responsibilities of the parties involved in the agreement, and can impose restrictions on how the software can be used.

■ Types of software licenses

There 5 main types of licenses:

- **Public domain**. This software is freely available to everyone;

- **Lesser general public license**. It is used by developers who can link to open-source libraries within their software;

- **Permissive**. This type of license specifies some requirements for the distribution and modification of the software.

- **Copyleft**. The licensed code may be distributed or modified as part of a software application or project if all the code involved is distributed under the same license;

- **Proprietary**. This is the most restrictive type of license. It is illegal to copy, modify or distribute the code.

The first four categories belong to a general category called **open-source**.

■ Digital certificates

A **digital certificate** is a file or electronic password that proves the authenticity of a device, server, or user through the use of cryptography and a public key.

Certificate authentication helps organisations ensure that only trusted devices and users can connect to their networks. Another common use of a digital certificate is to confirm the authenticity of a website to a web browser, also known as a **secure socket layer**.

In a wider sense, a digital certificate is any document in digital form, e.g. an identity card or any other type of card containing personal data.

legally binding: *legalmente vincolante*

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1 Use the Internet to find at least one example for each category of software license.

Software licenses				
Public domain	**Lesser general public use**	**Permissive**	**Copyleft**	**Proprietary**

2 PAIR WORK Discuss the advantages of a digital certificate over a paper one, e.g. a school certificate.