



National Standards and Accreditation of Career Practitioners Project

Briefing Paper 1: Standards – Background and Terminology

This paper has been written as part of the National Standards and Accreditation of Career Practitioners project commissioned through the Career Industry Council of Australia by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Education, Science and Training.

This paper is the first in a series of briefing papers that will be distributed by CICA to all career practitioners who belong to the member associations of CICA. The purpose of these papers is to assist career practitioners to be well informed and updated on the project. Further information on the project maybe downloaded from the CICA website: www.cica.org.au

Background

In recent years, international reviews of career guidance such as that conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have highlighted inadequacies in the training and qualifications of career practitioners in many countries including Australia. Career practitioners frequently have little or no training or education in career development and career guidance. It is not uncommon for individuals to move into the career industry with a background in a related field such as psychology, teaching, or social work. Even though such a background may provide skills and knowledge that are transferable to the career industry, it does not guarantee an appropriate theoretical and practical background in the provision of career services nor does it recognise the extensive theoretical, practice and research foundation on which the career industry is based.

The development of standards is a mechanism for addressing the problems posed by such a situation for practitioners, clients, employers and other stakeholder groups. Standards will assist the career industry move from being described as loosely professionalised (OECD, 2003) to being more easily able to demonstrate its professional status as defined by Professions Australia

A profession is a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards and uphold themselves to, and are accepted by the public as possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognised body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level, and who are prepared to exercise this knowledge and skills in the interest of others (Professions Australia, 2004).

What are Standards?

In the context of this project, standards are:

The systems and procedures developed by career practitioners and stakeholders in the career industry that:

- Define the career industry, its membership and its services
- Recognise the diverse skills and knowledge of career practitioners
- Guide practitioner entry into the industry
- Provide a foundation for designing career practitioner training
- Provide quality assurance to the public and other stakeholders in the industry
- Create an agreed terminology for the industry

(adapted from National Steering Committee for Career Development Guidelines and Standards, 2004).

In general, standards include

- a code of ethics/professional conduct;
- career specific-entry level qualifications; and
- continuing professional development.

Included in most codes of ethics are complaints procedures and processes for dealing with breaches of the code including dismissal and expulsion procedures. Some organisations such as the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) have developed a framework of core competencies that they believe underpin the work of career practitioners and some have identified competencies for areas of specialisation within the field.

Below are explanations of a number of terms common to standards and this project.

Code of ethics

A practical guide for professional behaviour and practice for those who offer direct service in career development and to inform the public which career development practitioners serve (National Steering Committee for Career Development Guidelines and Standards, 2004)

Continuing professional development

The ongoing maintenance and growth of professional excellence through participation in learning activities which are planned and implemented to achieve excellence for the benefits of participants, clients and the community (AASW, 2002)

Core competency

The skills, knowledge, and attitudes that all career development practitioners require regardless of their employment setting (National Steering Committee for Career Development Guidelines and Standards, 2004)

Areas of specialisation

Additional skills, knowledge, and attitudes that may be required depending on the type of work setting and the client groups that are being served (National Steering Committee for Career Development Guidelines and Standards, 2004)

The Task Ahead

The task of the National Standards and Accreditation of Career Practitioners Project is to develop a nationally agreed model of standards and accreditation. All member associations of CICA will be involved in this process. We encourage you to participate in the process and to support the introduction of standards in the Australian career industry.

CICA is aware of the diversity of backgrounds of career practitioners in Australia and is committed to a process that is

- Respectful;
- Inclusive;
- Consultative; and
- Collaborative.

In this regard, CICA will communicate regularly and appropriately with member associations, career practitioners and other stakeholders.

CICA is committed to the Australian standards for career practitioners being:

- context appropriate; and
- practitioner owned and endorsed.

References

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- National Steering Committee for Career Development Guidelines and Standards. (2004b). *Canadian standards and guidelines for career development practitioners Code of ethics*. Retrieved July 3, 2004, from <http://www.career-dev-guidelines.org>
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