



A Competency Framework For Guidance Practitioners

**GUIDANCE
FOR LIFE**

An Integrated Framework
for Lifelong Guidance in Ireland

2007 National Guidance
Forum Report

Foreword

The presentation of this report to Minister Mary Hanafin and Minister Micheál Martin from the National Guidance Forum marks an important milestone in the development of guidance in Ireland. The National Guidance Forum was established by the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in 2004 in recognition of the need to support individuals' self-management of their lives, their learning and their career paths for their own fulfilment and to ensure continued national prosperity. The Forum brought together key stakeholders from across the education and labour market spectrum. The result is that for the first time an agreed cohesive strategy for a national lifelong guidance service has been developed.

Guidance is recognised at national and European policy levels as fundamental to lifelong learning that supports the development of human potential, social inclusion, employability and economic prosperity. Recent reports on aspects of guidance provision in Ireland by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs¹ and the Department of Education and Science² reveal many strengths, but also significant gaps. The voice of the general public in Ireland, captured for the first time through the Forum's consultative process, endorses lifelong guidance provision as a priority area for development.

The National Guidance Forum's report provides an opportunity for the two Departments to move forward in the provision of a guidance service that underpins national priorities in lifelong learning.

The Forum's agreed *national lifelong guidance framework* outlines the knowledge, skills and competencies that guidance aims to develop among individuals at different times of their lives. The implementation of this framework is supported by *quality standards for service delivery* and *appropriately qualified practitioners*. The proposed *framework of organisational structures* will deliver a coordinated and comprehensive lifelong guidance service.

The timing of this report is opportune following as it does the announcement at the Finnish EU Presidency guidance conference in November 2006 that the European Commission is to support the establishment of a European Guidance Network. The Network will be representative of national guidance fora and will liaise with the European Commission, Cedefop, the European Training Foundation, the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy and international agencies, such as the OECD, in developing guidance policy and practice in member states. The implementation of the recommendations of the National Guidance Forum report will enable Ireland to participate in the European Guidance Network, thus providing access to the support of international good practice and strengthening Ireland's input into European guidance policy.

It has been a great privilege for me to Chair the National Guidance Forum and to witness first-hand the members' dedication to supporting the personal, social, educational and career development of all those living in our country at all stages of their lives. This Report is the result of a wealth of expertise in guidance and I am confident that it will enable the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to continue to build on their successful initiative in setting up the National Guidance Forum.

Professor Joyce O'Connor,
Chair of National Guidance Forum

¹ Phillips, S., Clarke, A., Classon, J. (2006) *Careers and Labour Market Information in Ireland: A Study for the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs*, Dublin: Forfas

² Department of Education and Science (2006) *Review of Guidance in Second Level Schools*, Dublin: Government Publications

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The National Guidance Forum

BACKGROUND TO THE NATIONAL GUIDANCE FORUM

The National Guidance Forum was a joint initiative of the Minister for Education and Science and the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, which was launched at an international guidance conference during the Irish Presidency of the European Union in April 2004. In a subsequent letter setting out the mandate of the Forum, the ministers cited the EU Commission's definition of the Forum as 'an assembly of all the relevant actors concerned with the development of policy, systems and practices for lifelong guidance' (EU Commission 2004, cited in letter from ministers, June 2004). The term of office of the Forum ended in October 2006, with the submission of the final report to the two ministers.

Remit and Objectives of the National Guidance Forum

The remit of the National Guidance Forum was to explore how individuals, at any point throughout their lives, can access quality guidance appropriate to their needs; identify collaborative action across the guidance continuum and agree recommendations in collaboration with other stakeholders (Letter from Minister for Education and Science and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, April 2004).

The agreed objectives of the Forum were to

- » Ensure that guidance becomes central to the public policy and planning process in education, the labour market and social strategies;
- » Develop, communicate and implement meaningful models of guidance that underpin a vision of personal fulfilment, a fair society and sustainable employability;
- » Urgently harness and proactively manage the wealth of existing guidance resources and agree mechanisms for measuring relevant and realistic outcomes;
- » Move from a fragmented provision of guidance to a cohesive multi-faceted professional, accessible service, responsive to the needs of the individual and society.

In its final report to the ministers, the Forum presents its proposals for a new national lifelong guidance strategy, the implementation of which will achieve all of the above objectives.

Membership of the National Guidance Forum

The National Guidance Forum had an independent Chair and 33 members who represented the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment; professional bodies; trainers of guidance practitioners; state agencies with a remit for guidance; employer bodies; trade unions; parents; education management and practitioners from primary, post-primary, further and higher education levels, including universities and institutes of technology; consumers, and private guidance practitioners (See the list of Forum members on page ii). All of the groups represented made submissions that informed the proposals made by the Forum in its final report.

Outline of the work undertaken by the Forum, June 2004-October 2006

The Forum met eleven times in the period from June 2004 to October 2006. During its term of office, the Forum agreed a common vision and definition of guidance across the education, labour market and community sectors. The Forum's vision for the future of guidance is outlined in this report.

The Forum's definition of guidance is as follows:

Guidance facilitates people throughout their lives to manage their own educational, training, occupational, personal, social, and life choices so that they reach their full potential and contribute to the development of a better society.

In the past two years, the Forum has also:

- » Collaborated with the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs to draw up the terms of reference for a national audit of careers information and dissemination: the outcomes of this study are incorporated into the Forum's recommendations;
- » Prepared a proposal for the establishment of a National Learning Line;
- » Participated in the EU Joint Actions funded project *Developing National Guidance Fora in Six Member States* (MEDSUI) 2004-2006;
- » Liaised with the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy on developments in guidance at EU level and their implications for guidance in Ireland;
- » Made a submission about funding for guidance under the National Development Plan 2007-2013. The Forum proposed measures to address the gaps in current guidance services by enabling the provision of a seamless, quality service that maximises resources, with the collaboration of guidance stakeholders.

The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) provided the Forum secretariat. A Steering Group managed the work and strategic direction of the Forum, co-ordinated the work of sub-committees, represented the Forum in networks with other groups and disseminated the outcomes of the Forum's work. The Steering Group also made links with the two ministers to keep them informed of progress. There

were four sub-committees of the Forum, each of which was charged with a specific task that contributed to the achievement of the Forum's objectives. The following reports produced by the sub-committees are summarised in the Forum's report *Guidance for Life: An Integrated Framework for Lifelong Guidance in Ireland* as a background to the Forum's proposals and published in full on the accompanying CDROM.

Guidance in Ireland: Background Scoping Report

The sub-committee produced a background scoping paper on *Guidance in Ireland* to outline current provision and identify gaps. This scoping paper has informed the recommendations of the Forum on policy development and coordination of guidance.

Perceptions of the General Public on Guidance and Guidance Services: Consultative Process Report

The sub-committee undertook a consultative process on behalf of the Forum, to research public perception and experience of guidance. The outcomes of the research have informed the Forum's recommendations for strengthening provision to achieve a seamless guidance service across the lifespan.

Quality in Guidance

The sub-committee produced a quality assurance framework for guidance that will enable policy makers and providers to ensure that they provide high-quality services to clients throughout the life cycle. It also proposes structures for evaluating services and quality improvement measures.

A Competency Framework for Guidance Practitioners

The sub-committee developed a framework of competencies for guidance practitioners, which will influence the future professional education and training of practitioners who will provide guidance across the life cycle and in a range of different contexts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper outlines a competency framework for guidance practitioners that will enable the vision of a lifelong guidance service proposed by the National Guidance Forum to become a reality. The competencies are grouped into five main areas:

1. Theory and practice of vocational educational and personal/social guidance across the lifespan

This includes the competencies to:

- » Facilitate vocational career/life choices throughout the lifespan;
- » Facilitate educational choices throughout the lifespan;
- » Facilitate personal/social choices throughout the lifespan.

Specialisation – Assessment

2. Labour market education and training

This includes the competencies to:

- » Provide up-to-date information on educational and training opportunities, using information technology and other resources as appropriate to assist individuals in their career development;
- » Help individuals to interpret and apply labour market information to achieve their career objectives;
- » Assist individuals to create their own career opportunities;
- » Assist individuals in self-management, self-promotion and networking effectively;
- » Establish linkages with other specialist services and refer individuals to these services where appropriate.

3. Counselling

This includes the competencies to:

- » Engage in personal counselling either individually or in groups;
- » Clarify the professional and ethical issues in group counselling and group guidance;
- » Help individuals to develop a personal life plan;
- » Engage in appropriate supervision to develop counselling skills and to progress work with individuals;
- » Recognise when it is necessary to seek the support of other professionals in the counselling role.

4. Information and resource management

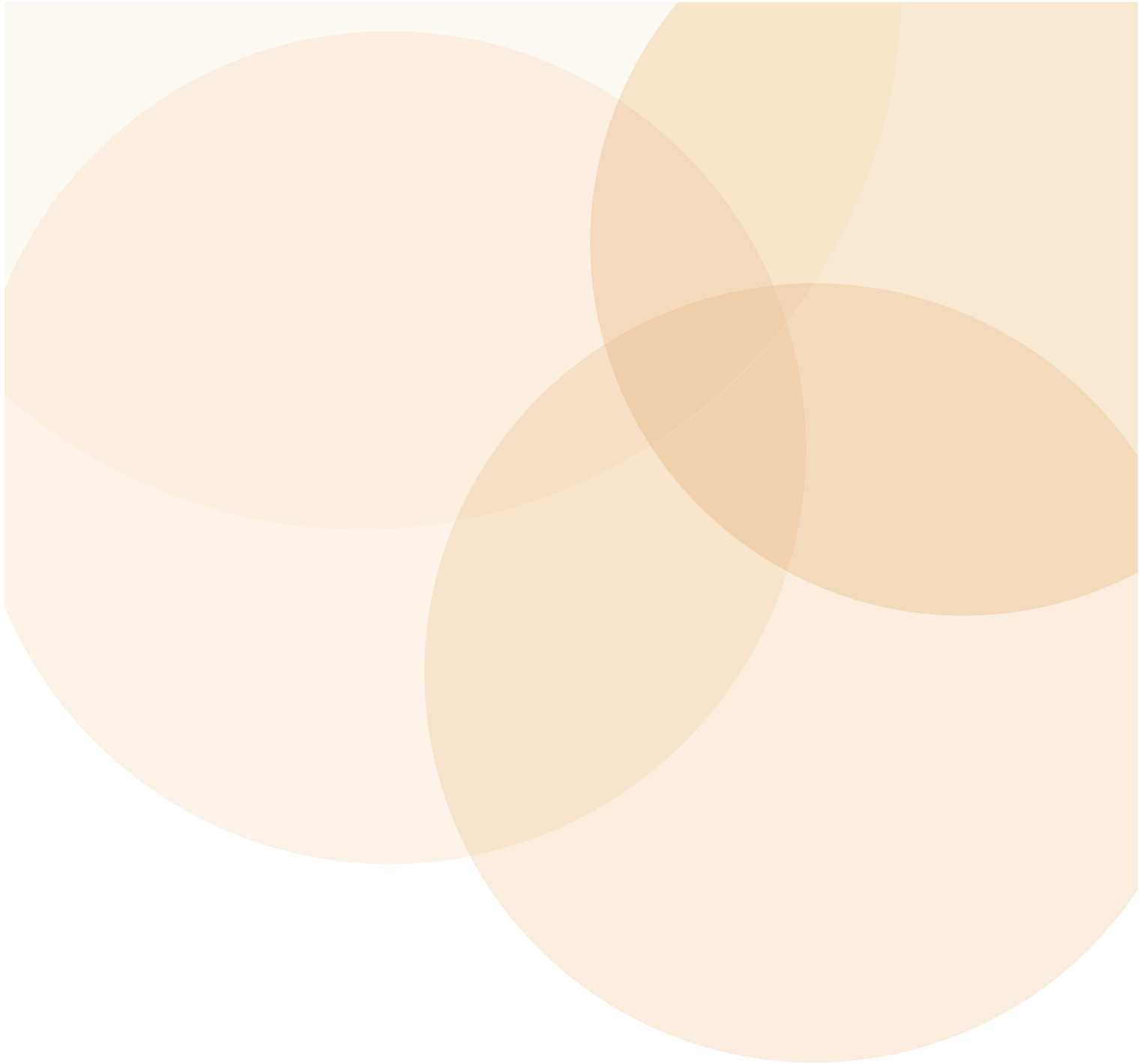
This includes the competencies to:

- » Develop, maintain and review information management strategies to provide up to date personal and social, educational and vocational/career information;
- » Use information technology to support practice;
- » Follow efficient and effective case and project management procedures;
- » Establish and maintain records, adhering to relevant confidentiality guidelines.

5. Professional practice

This includes the competencies to:

- » Engage in consultation, collaborative work, continuing professional development, supervision and research to improve and develop professional practice;
- » Evaluate the service provided to individuals;
- » Practise in accordance with ethical guidelines;
- » Organise and manage a service and supervise personnel as appropriate;
- » Develop and implement strategic and operational plans for lifelong guidance services as appropriate.



01



Introduction

In the past, guidance services in Ireland were mainly provided either to young people towards the end of their schooling, or to adults who did not successfully complete their education and who required guidance in adult life. Guidance was also provided to people who became unemployed and required guidance support to secure another job. The initial training of guidance counsellors qualified graduates to work either in an educational or in a labour market environment.

Today, it is widely recognised that guidance is a service required by people of all ages to manage life-work transitions across the lifespan. The National Guidance Forum has proposed an integrated strategy that will help to achieve the vision of lifelong guidance in Ireland in the future. The Forum established a sub-committee to outline the competencies required by guidance practitioners to deliver the range of lifelong guidance services that the Forum proposes. The outline framework of competencies described in this paper will inform the design of education and training programmes for guidance practitioners. Such programmes will include initial and continuing education and training, and will be delivered by various providers nationally.

The National Guidance Forum envisages that in future the initial education and training of guidance practitioners will be modular, allowing practitioners to become qualified to work in a range of roles across the whole spectrum of lifelong guidance services. It is further envisaged that practitioners will be enabled to return to training if they so wish, to study and qualify in additional modules, so that practitioners can take on new guidance roles within the national lifelong guidance service.

COMPETENCIES FOR GUIDANCE PRACTITIONERS: THE POLICY CONTEXT

'High quality guidance provision throughout life is a key component of education, training and employability strategies to attain the strategic goal of Europe becoming the world's most dynamic knowledge based society by 2010' (EU Resolution on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe – adopted in May 2004).

The need to provide access to high quality information, guidance, and counselling on education and training opportunities and to enable citizens of any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competencies and interests, to make life choices and to manage all aspects of their life paths, is a key objective of EU policies. The Resolution on Guidance refers to a range of EU directives, resolutions, and other policy documents, which identify guidance as a key element in achieving EU goals in the areas of economic and social development. Effective guidance provision is also considered to play a key role in promoting social inclusion, equality, and active citizenship by encouraging and supporting individuals' participation in education and training and in assisting them to attain self-fulfilment.

If these key objectives are to be achieved, the nature and extent of current guidance services must be reviewed and such a review must include an evaluation of the training and qualification requirements for all guidance workers. In Ireland, guidance services are provided mainly in education and in sections of the labour market sector through FÁS. As a result, there are groups of citizens who have little or no access to a guidance service and there are guidance workers who have little or no opportunities for career progression or mobility either within or across guidance services.

Policy makers have not defined the nature of the guidance provision for the diversity of the client groups as set out in policy and as a result, trainers and practitioner associations have developed training programmes quite divorced from public policy objectives³. This lack of linkage between training institutions and policy makers was also highlighted in a paper prepared for the OECD⁴ as was the fact that few countries have addressed the issue of diversity of qualifications versus the traditional professional qualification model. Consequently, training programmes for practitioners have been developed by course providers and practitioner associations and have not kept pace with the changing needs of individuals in rapidly changing labour market and societal contexts. It was also found that in most countries surveyed, there is no mutual recognition of guidance qualifications between the education and labour market sectors, and no facility for progression from non-expert to expert guidance worker status⁵.

The development of a competence-based approach to training, leading to a more flexible qualification structure, with opportunities to progress from first-line guidance provider to expert status provides an efficient and cost effective way of responding to the different levels of individuals' needs as well as providing career progression opportunities for practitioners. A range of policy options for training are put forward in the OECD/EU Commission handbook for policy makers⁶, which include the development of a competency framework for all those who are engaged in the provision of a guidance service. This framework should include the competencies needed to deliver government policy goals, and should cover all relevant settings in which guidance is provided and all categories of staff. The framework should then be used to develop modular and cross-sectoral training programmes.

Within this policy context, a sub-committee of the National Guidance Forum explored the range of guidance services required in the future and began work on outlining the framework of competencies required by guidance practitioners to deliver these services. In the view of the Forum, the framework of competencies for practitioners will meet the needs of individuals in diverse settings and will provide for the possibility of mobility and advancement of the practitioners themselves. The structural changes in third level institutions that will result from the Bologna process⁷, of which Ireland is a part, provide a timely opportunity to develop more comprehensive and flexible training modules and programmes for guidance practitioners so that they can help to deliver the range of lifelong guidance services envisaged in the future.

The National Guidance Forum sub-committee reviewed various international models of competencies for guidance practitioners and took account of these in outlining the Irish framework. It is envisaged that further work will be undertaken to develop and implement the competency framework within the new organisational structures for lifelong guidance proposed by the Forum.

¹ Phillips, S., Clarke, A., Classon, J. (2006) *Careers and Labour Market Information in Ireland*, Dublin: Forfas

² Department of Education and Science (2006) *Review of Guidance in Second Level Schools*, Dublin: DES

³ OECD/European Communities (2004) *Career Guidance-A Handbook for Policy Makers*, Paris: OECD/European Commission

⁴ John McCarthy (2001) *The Skills, Training and Qualifications of Guidance Workers - a paper prepared for the OECD review of information, guidance and counselling services* – Commissioned jointly by the European Commission and the OECD.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ OECD/European Communities (2004) *Career Guidance-A Handbook for Policy Makers*, Paris: OECD/European Commission

⁷ <http://www.bologna.ie/home/default.asp>

A FRAMEWORK OF COMPETENCIES FOR GUIDANCE PRACTITIONERS

Vision for Guidance Practitioners

Guidance practitioners adhere to highest standards of practice at all times. The adherence of guidance practitioners to these standards demonstrates their professional status as reflected in the following definition.

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.⁸

Definition of Guidance Practitioner

'Guidance practitioner' is a generic term that refers to any direct service provider in the guidance field. The range of practitioners to whom the competency framework apply includes (but is not limited to) guidance counsellors, guidance coordinators, careers advisors, careers information officers, placement officers, disability access officers, mentors, life coaches, job coaches, careers and appointments officers, employment service officers, LES mediators, careers officers, primary school support teachers, career management consultants, placement coordinators. The specific set of competencies required in each case will depend on the context and job description and/or professional accountability of the guidance practitioner.

Areas of Specialisation

Knowledge, skills and attitudes required to undertake specialised tasks or roles, and/or work with specialised populations are included in the framework. Practitioners operating at this level will require at a minimum a level 8 higher degree, or a postgraduate level 9 qualification in guidance.

Benefits of Competencies

Competencies provide a mechanism for recognising the knowledge, skills and experience of practitioners. They can be used to guide training providers on course content and inform employers of the appropriate knowledge and skills required to carry out guidance roles. They also allow a broad range of guidance roles to be identified and recognised within national and international qualifications frameworks.

Competencies

The competencies proposed for the Irish context are grouped into five main areas:

1. Theory and practice of vocational, educational and personal/social guidance throughout the lifespan.
2. Labour market education and training
3. Counselling
4. Information and resource management
5. Professional practice

Specialisations

Assessment, guidance service management, and liaison are specialisations integral to the work of many guidance practitioners. Assessment is outlined within the category of theory and practice of vocational, educational, and personal/social guidance. Guidance service management and liaison is integrated within the category of professional practice.

Note: The term 'individual' is used throughout the competency framework. However, it is recognised that guidance services may be provided for individuals or groups in a range of settings and formats.

⁸ Career Industry Council of Australia (2006) Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners, Australia: CCIA

1. Theory and practice of vocational, educational, and personal/social guidance throughout the lifespan

A guidance practitioner will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- » Theories of vocational/career development across the lifespan and the application of the theories in career/life planning;
- » The application of vocational/career development theories in diverse education, training and work contexts;
- » The range and purpose of psychometric tests that can be used to support career planning;
- » Vocational/career development issues and the dynamics of vocational behaviour;
- » The vocational/career decision making process;
- » Factors (external and internal to the individual) that may influence an individual's vocational/career decision making;
- » The range and appropriateness of the career planning materials and computer/internet-based career information systems that are available;
- » National and European policies on vocational/career planning, employability and lifelong learning;
- » Labour market needs, statistics and trends;
- » The diversity of individuals and the impact of cultural differences on career and life choices;
- » Issues facing particular groups (for example people with special educational needs, immigrants, asylum seekers, women returning to the labour market, people who are unemployed);
- » The referral process and establishing referral networks.

The Competency to Facilitate Career/Life Choices through the Lifespan

A guidance practitioner will be able to:

- » Plan, design, implement and evaluate lifelong vocational/career development programmes and interventions that support career self-management;
- » Assist individuals in identifying their vocational/career development needs;

- » Empower individuals to set realistic goals, employ effective strategies and manage change and transition;
- » Assist individuals in developing vocational/career development plans and in identifying labour market opportunities;
- » Use vocational/career development resources and techniques as appropriate to prepare individuals for the labour market;
- » Deliver vocational/career planning services in a range of policy and operational contexts;
- » Collaborate and cooperate with recruitment agencies, employer organisations and other stakeholders to maximise the benefits of the guidance programme/service;
- » Refer individuals to appropriate resources and supports within the community.

The Competency to Facilitate Educational Choices through the Lifespan

A guidance practitioner will be able to:

- » Foster an appreciation of the value of, and commitment to, lifelong learning supportive of life/work goals;
- » Plan, design, implement and evaluate lifelong educational development programmes and interventions;
- » Assist individuals in identifying their educational development/learning support needs;
- » Guide individuals and groups of individuals to develop educational plans, including a Personal Profile and Education Portfolio as appropriate;
- » Use educational development resources and techniques as appropriate;
- » Deliver education developmental services in a range of policy and operational contexts;
- » Employ educational strategies/development programmes to assist individuals in meeting/addressing their learning challenges, including learning difficulties and in cases where the mother tongue is not the language of the country;
- » Employ the use of psychometric tests in assisting individuals with their educational choices and development;

- » Effectively consult and collaborate with parents, teachers and other professionals as appropriate in relation to an individual's educational progress and development;
- » Assist, as appropriate, teachers/academics/tutors to enhance their formal and non-formal methodologies in the use of guidance resources;
- » Facilitate teaching colleagues in implementing appropriate aspects of the guidance programme within the curriculum;
- » Refer individuals to appropriate resources and supports within the community;
- » Collaborate and cooperate with educational providers and other stakeholders to maximise the benefits of the guidance programme/service;
- » Assist individuals to see the benefit of participation in international exchange programmes.

The Competency to Facilitate Personal/Social Choices through the Lifespan

A guidance practitioner will be able to:

- » Plan, design, implement and evaluate lifelong personal and social development programmes and interventions;
- » Assist individuals to develop self-awareness of their personal values, attitudes, beliefs and those of others;
- » Help individuals identify strategies for building self-esteem and that of others;
- » Facilitate individuals in identifying and expanding existing coping strategies;
- » Assist individuals to understand the importance of emotional expression and develop appropriate ways to express feelings in different contexts;
- » Assist individuals to develop their communications skills;
- » Help individuals in understanding the importance of positive thinking and help individuals develop the ability to use this life skill effectively;
- » Assist individuals in understanding the impact of stress on emotional and social health and assist them in developing personal skills for managing stress.

Specialisation – Assessment

In addition to needs assessment, a wide range of assessment tools and processes have been and are constantly being developed. Assessment methods complement the career development process; they do not replace it. It is important that guidance practitioners are fully aware of the ethical use of assessment and the need to be appropriately qualified in any assessment processes they administer. The aim is to integrate and evaluate data from various inventories, tests, interviews, scales and other techniques that are used to measure abilities, aptitudes, barriers, life roles, interests, personality, values, attitudes, educational achievements, skills and other relevant information. This competency involves identifying when assessment is appropriate, which test instrument to use, interpreting and explaining to an individual the results of an assessment and its implications.

A guidance practitioner will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- » The ethical issues involved in test selection, administration, interpretation of results, feedback and storage;
- » Appropriate test selection;
- » The importance of reliability, validity and norms;
- » The principles of scaling and standardisation;
- » The rationale for using or not using psychometric tests as part of an assessment process;
- » Research statistics;
- » Scoring procedures;
- » Issues affecting test performance;
- » Providing appropriate feedback;
- » The referral process and establishing referral networks.

A guidance practitioner will be able to:

- » Conduct a needs assessment of the individual's context;
- » Administer and interpret results of specific assessment instruments including for example aptitude and ability tests, interest inventories, problem checklists, study skills kits and personality and self-esteem inventories;
- » Administer and interpret results of computerised tests;
- » Accurately and thoroughly diagnose and interpret individuals' needs based on results of assessment tools and techniques;
- » Use counselling skills in exploring test results with individuals;
- » Review and evaluate assessment results with individuals;
- » Use the data derived from assessment appropriately and according to the individual's needs and context;
- » Facilitate effective referral of individuals to other services as appropriate.

2. Labour market education and training

Where the guidance practitioner is working within a labour market context the following competencies will be required.

A guidance practitioner will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- » Organisational and employment structures;
 - » How cultural differences of individuals affect their expectations of the labour market;
 - » How the labour market operates, its trends and likely future direction ;
 - » The macroeconomic context of the labour market, employment/unemployment, immigration, labour demand and labour costs;
 - » How productivity and competitiveness affect the labour market and its future direction;
 - » How to interpret labour market needs and future labour market trends by analysing all available data
 - » How the current labour market relates to individuals' aspirations, skills and needs.
- A guidance practitioner will be able to:
- » Collect, organise and maintain up-to-date information on educational and training opportunities for people in the labour market and those wishing to enter or reenter the labour market;
 - » Raise individuals' awareness of appropriate educational and training options that will match career ambitions;
 - » Use information technology resources available online from education and training providers;
 - » Select and use appropriate careers information databases and assessment tools to assist individuals in their career development;
 - » Assist individuals to use information to make educational or training plans;
 - » Provide professional advice to parents, teachers, school administrators, adult educators, trainees and others who may wish to facilitate the career progression of individuals;
 - » Assist individuals to understand the nature and value of qualifications from educational and training organisations and where they fit in the national and international qualifications frameworks;
 - » Assist individuals to understand legislation pertaining to education and training;
 - » Source up-to-date and accurate labour market information on a local, national and international basis;
- » How to assist individuals to formulate and review their Personal Development Plan within their current employment, by discussing their role, performance, strengths, areas for improvement, training and development needs and their medium to short term objectives within that employment;
 - » How to facilitate and support individuals in employment transitions;
 - » How to facilitate individuals to manage their work/life issues;
 - » The range of educational and training opportunities and resources available;

- » Critically evaluate and interpret labour market statistics;
- » Provide appropriate accurate and up to date labour market information to individuals that will assist them to meet their career ambition;
- » Help individuals understand and apply labour market information to achieve their career objectives;
- » Assist individuals to interpret and use current labour market information for career planning;
- » Assist individuals to identify labour market opportunities by using local and national media, state and private recruitment mechanisms, online resources, networking, using appropriate professional bodies and employer/worker organisations;
- » Facilitate individuals' increased understanding/awareness of themselves and the impact this awareness has on work searches;
- » Assist individuals in creating their own opportunities;
- » Assist individuals in all aspects of job search strategies;
- » Assist individuals in self-management, self-promotion and self marketing;
- » Assist individuals in networking effectively;
- » Establish linkages with other specialist services and refer individuals to these services where appropriate.

3. COUNSELLING

Guidance practitioners who are identified as *guidance counsellors* will demonstrate the ability to apply counselling theory and skills in one-to-one and group settings.

Counselling

Counselling competency is the capacity to use appropriate counselling skills, the heart of which are the core competencies of empathy, genuineness and unconditional positive regard, and to facilitate individuals in identifying options, making decisions and resolving difficulties. These skills include: active listening, clarifying, paraphrasing, setting boundaries, contracting, challenging, focusing, motivating, utilising non-verbal communications, probing, questioning, reflecting feelings, prioritising issues, structuring, summarising a session and reviewing progress.

The guidance counsellor will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- » The theories of counselling and of group facilitation, group leadership, membership and how groups function;
- » The main factors related to the personal development of individuals and the dynamics of their behaviour;
- » The counselling process including developing a relationship, contracting and clarifying limits of confidentiality, assessing the concerns of the individual, listening to the individual's story and accepting it, evaluating the individual's emotional state, addressing the concerns of the individual, working through the issues, exploring solutions, planning to implement agreed solutions;
- » One's own cultural conditioning, the conditioning of other individuals and the socio-political system of which they are part;
- » Cultural values, biases, and attitudes that may hinder one's capacity to adopt a positive view of pluralism;

- » One's professional boundaries and the appropriate referral of cases to other specialised services where necessary;
- » The full range of referral agencies available both locally and nationally.

The guidance counsellor will be able to:

- » Engage in personal counselling with individuals around issues such as stress, transitional difficulties, relationship issues, personal/sexual identity, group culture pressures, health issues and bereavement. In cases where the degree of disturbance to the mental well-being of the individual is significant, the guidance counsellor will be able to make appropriate referrals to specialised professionals. This includes, for example, cases where individuals disclose issues such as suicide ideation, addiction, self-harm, sexual abuse, and eating disorder;
- » Help individuals to develop a personal life plan;
- » Clarify the professional and ethical issues in group counselling and group guidance;
- » Initiate, lead and bring closure to groups;
- » Evaluate group outcomes and one's own role as leader in the group process;
- » Demonstrate an ability and commitment to engage in appropriate supervision, proportionate to the counselling workload and to use it to further develop one's counselling skills and to progress work with individuals;
- » Demonstrate an ability and commitment to seek such other support as may be necessary, particularly when major unresolved/vulnerable/distressing issues manifest themselves in their own lives;
- » Be open to ongoing reflection on one's own life narrative and its impact on the counselling relationship.

4. Information and resource management

A guidance practitioner will know and understand:

- » How to collect, analyse and use information appropriately;
- » How to interpret and analyse data;
- » How to devise and maintain records;
- » Legislation and policy in relation to information management systems, education, training and work and the application of these to practice;
- » The range of materials and technology (management information systems) available to support him/her in his practice;

A guidance practitioner will be able to:

- » Develop, maintain and review information management strategies;
- » Use information technology to support practice;
- » Keep up to date with technological developments;
- » Establish and maintain records;
- » Utilise planning, time and project management skills;
- » Follow case and project management procedures;
- » Collect, organise, disseminate and provide up to date personal and social, educational and vocational/career information.

5. PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE;

A guidance practitioner will know and understand;

- » How to develop, deliver, manage and evaluate a quality service/programme;
- » The application of project management procedures to practice;
- » The ethical guidelines for the practice of guidance;
- » How to conduct research into one's own professional practice;
- » Financial and budget management.

A guidance practitioner will be able to:

- » Evaluate the service provided to individuals;
- » Operate case and project management procedures;
- » Engage in collaborative work with individuals/ stakeholders and colleagues;
- » Develop relationships and networks with other professionals;
- » Behave in accordance with ethical guidelines;
- » Engage in consultation with stakeholders to improve and develop practice;
- » Organise and manage a service and supervise personnel as appropriate;
- » Promote staff development as appropriate;
- » Undertake research;
- » Develop and implement strategic and operational plans;
- » Engage in ongoing continuing professional development to improve his/her and to engage in supervision as appropriate;
- » Contribute to the development of good practice.



06

Acronyms and References

Acronyms used in this report

CEDEFOP: Centre Européen pour le Développement de la Formation Professionnelle (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training)

CCIA: Career Industry Council of Australia

EC: European Commission

EU: European Union

FÁS: Foras Áiseanna Saothair (Training and Employment Authority)

LES: Local Employment Service

NCGE: National Centre for Guidance in Education

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

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