



# Career Development **QUALITY BENCHMARKS** for good practice

## Consultancy Services Benchmarking Program for schools

The OECD has recognised that career services are necessary for effective transition systems. It notes that career management skills are an essential literacy alongside other literacies for successful school completion and transition into and from further education, training and work

# Career Development QUALITY BENCHMARKS for good practice

## Why do we need career development services in our schools?

Career development programs and services support young people to build the skills they need to do the jobs they want. Careers services in schools play a vital role in the success of transition programs. Ensuring that careers services can meet the quality benchmarks for delivery provides school's with the evidence base that they are meeting their obligations to students, parents and the community in regards to preparing students for transition.

## What is Benchmarking for Quality Practice?

The ACCE provides a consultancy service to schools wishing to benchmark their careers service against the quality indicators for good practice in careers. The ACCE has produced the Career Development Quality Benchmarks for good practice (CDQB) a measurement tool, to assist schools to establish a framework for the delivery of career services to their students and the school community.

## What happens in a benchmarking activity?

Professional career practitioners trained in the benchmarking process, work with the career practitioner and other school staff to benchmark the school's service. The benchmarkers provide a report, action plan and follow up in a few weeks to see what further assistance the school may need.

## What does the CDQB measure?

The benchmarking tool establishes a baseline position for the school's current service and then identifies any missing elements in the careers service against seven categories of delivery:

- Leadership and Management
- Strategic Planning Processes
- Data and Analysis
- Resources
- Client Focus
- Processes and Services
- Outcomes

These seven categories reflect the eight principles in the Guiding Principles for Career Development Services and Career Information Products, the national guidelines designed by the Career Industry Council of Australia (2007). The tool is for schools and organisations delivering career development programs and services to young people. It is not intended to assess an individual. Rather, it is designed as a way of improving career development programs and services in organisations working with young people.

## How many people are involved?

The CDQB is most effective when used by a group of stakeholders as they work through it together to jointly produce an Action Plan for the coming twelve months. One important outcome from the benchmarking activity is the commencement of a Strategic Plan for the careers service. It is important that the school is well represented during the benchmarking activity. The school benchmarking team can include; the career practitioner, principals, principal class, leading teachers, coordinators, parents, community stakeholders, students and general staff. At a minimum the Benchmarking Team should include all the people responsible for the delivery of careers services in the school, the principal or principal class and staff responsible for the delivery of curriculum improvements, pathways and transition.

The process aims to support the school and provide them with a means of validating the important work of careers practitioners and ensure that their career service meets national guidelines for quality in career education. Benchmarking can be a vital part of a successful improvement process. There are many benefits to benchmarking including a clearer understanding of the role of the career service in the school, support for new program initiatives and effective use of existing and new resources.

## How long does it take?

The benchmark activity takes one full day of meetings directly with team members. A schedule of activities for the day is organised by the Benchmarker and the career practitioner at least one week prior to the activity taking place. During the activity the Benchmarker will gather evidence of delivery and provide validation to the school of the areas which are meeting quality practices in careers services. Areas for improvement are identified and discussed and the school team develops their Action Plan with the Benchmarker before the end of the day. The process is designed to affirm good practice and identify strengths in service delivery. Identified gaps in service provision are included in the Action Plan as items for ongoing development and review.

## What happens at the end of the benchmarking activity?

At the conclusion of the activity, the Benchmarker develops a report outlining the schools' baseline position, the benchmark process undertaken in the school, the findings from the benchmark activity and recommendations for the service. The report includes the agreed Action Plan for the next twelve months and any additional follow up actions required to complete the improvements to the career service. The Report is forwarded electronically to the school. Copies are sent to the principal and the career practitioner. The school receives their Benchmarking Report 7 days after the completion of the activity. After four weeks the Benchmarker makes contact with the school to ascertain the level of engagement with the Action Plan and feedback is provided.

## What support is available after the process?

Schools can apply for additional professional development to implement their action plan and to support the career development of students, parents and staff. There will be a cost involved for this service.

## How does the school benefit from this activity?

Career practitioners and teachers benefit from establishing the level of service they are currently providing to students, parents and the broader school community. The benchmarking activity helps identify what good practice would look like for the school. It customises an Action Plan for the school. The Action Plan provides the opportunity to set achievable short and long term goals and then establishes the task list to complete the actions in each goal.

