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Preface

While this subject benchmark statement has been informed by the *Recognition scheme for subject benchmark statements*, it has also taken account of the fact that subject benchmark statements that are specific to the higher education (HE) sector in Scotland are handled by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Scotland and are subject to a separate process and consultation.

Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject. They also represent general expectations about standards for the award of qualifications at a given level and articulate the attributes and capabilities that those possessing such qualifications should be able to demonstrate.

Subject benchmark statements are used for a variety of purposes. Primarily, they are an important external source of reference for higher education institutions (HEIs) when new programmes are being designed and developed in a subject area. They provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with specific programmes but are not a specification of a detailed curriculum in the subject. Subject benchmark statements provide for variety and flexibility in the design of programmes and encourage innovation within an agreed overall conceptual framework.

Subject benchmark statements also provide support to HEIs in the pursuit of enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR). They enable the learning outcomes specified for a particular programme to be reviewed and evaluated against agreed general expectations about standards.

Finally, subject benchmark statements may be one of a number of external reference points that are drawn upon for the purposes of ELIR. Reviewers do not use subject benchmark statements as a crude checklist for these purposes; however, they are used in conjunction with the relevant programme specifications, the institution's own internal evaluation documentation, in order to enable reviewers to come to a rounded judgement based on a broad range of evidence.

The subject benchmark statement is subject to future revision that reflects developments in the subject, the experience of HEIs in utilising the statement, and the evolving nature of career services in Scotland.

Ministerial foreword

Our number one priority is growing Scotland's economy. To do that we need to help all Scots contribute as much as they can. We are committed to developing skills to allow people to do this and to prepare for tomorrow's labour market. Learning, at all levels, while not narrowly focused on employability alone, must contribute to a culture of enterprise and actively enable people to improve their quality of life and to take their part in a prosperous and competitive economy.

It is important not to leave anyone out - neither the young, the workforce of tomorrow, nor those already in work, nor those who are older and will remain more active in the workforce than has been the case in past years.

Therefore, it is important that we develop in Scotland our ability to equip people, all people, with the skills of career planning that will allow everyone, throughout their lives, to make complex choices in the world of work and to remain in work for as long as they wish. To this end, we need to make sure we have skilled practitioners able to advise people in career planning and career choices.

There are many organisations operating in the fields of career planning, employability support, lifelong learning and workforce development. In these organisations we need competent, flexible practitioners able to meet the diverse needs of individuals and give them advice and support.

This subject benchmark statement provides a robust framework for the skills and knowledge needed for effective and flexible career planning practitioners. The subject benchmark statement gives clear statements on what is expected of students completing professional level courses. This subject benchmark statement, therefore, will be a useful source of reference for all those involved in career planning.

In Scotland we have invested in Careers Scotland to take the lead in career planning. However, it is my real hope that the subject benchmark statement will be useful not just for those in Scotland but throughout the rest of the United Kingdom and even further afield. The subject benchmark statement is written so that it is useful in a variety of contexts and applicable in many different settings. So I hope that its use is not only limited to Scotland, but that its importance is recognised internationally by all who are involved in career planning.

Nicol Stephen MSP
Deputy First Minister and
Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning

Joint statement from Careers Scotland and QAA Scotland

Careers Scotland and QAA Scotland are delighted to publish this subject benchmark statement for career **guidance**. The context for the delivery of career **guidance** services has changed significantly in recent years and practitioners now deliver a wide range of services to diverse client and customer groups. There is widespread recognition that qualifications need to adapt and change to meet the needs of all age career **guidance** organisations, such as Careers Scotland, or the wider constituency of organisations operating in the field of advice and guidance, employability support, social inclusion and workforce development. This subject benchmark statement has been progressed to support and inform the development of a new postgraduate qualification in career **guidance** and related fields which will better meet the needs of Scotland's population.

These developments have taken place within the Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF) developed by QAA Scotland in partnership with the Scottish HE sector, Universities Scotland, the Scottish Funding Council, the National Union of Students Scotland (NUS Scotland) and the Higher Education Academy. Among other things, the QEF aims to support the identification, sharing and dissemination of good practice in learning and teaching, and to focus on the continuous enhancement of the student experience. This includes the development of new qualifications and new ways of learning in HE for a student population whose demographics are changing.

The development of the subject benchmark statement supports the enhancement approach in many ways. It addresses the changing needs of students and changing nature of the student population by providing a robust framework for developing future qualifications that produce competent, reflective practitioners delivering needs based services to individuals of any age or status in life. Key principles underpinning the statement were that lifetime career planning should support lifelong learning, and practitioners should be equipped to assist individuals to develop effective career planning skills, with resulting 'career resilience', throughout life.

The subject benchmark statement was produced in association with the UK professional body, the Institute of Career Guidance (ICG). The subject benchmark statement has drawn from existing standards and competency frameworks, both within the UK and internationally, and has been produced after extensive consultation with key stakeholders who have an interest in career **guidance** in Scotland. The subject benchmark statement has also been established within the context of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

The purpose of the subject benchmark statement

The main purpose of the subject benchmark statement is to identify the key knowledge, skills and attitudes expected of students completing professional courses in career **guidance** and to provide guidelines for learning providers in developing career **guidance** qualifications in Scotland.

Career planning is defined as the process of making effective and informed career decisions and implementing these decisions successfully. Practitioners need to acquire the knowledge and skills to support clients to develop their own effective career planning skills and strategies that will enable them to cope with change throughout their lives, ie become career resilient. Provision of, and access to, career-related learning (career and enterprise education) and information supports the career planning process.

This subject benchmark statement will ensure that there is a consistent approach to the core content of courses designed to produce effective career **guidance** practitioners. It is acknowledged that courses may be developed at different levels within the SCQF, for example, Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Professional Development Awards and that differing levels of engagement or skill development may be required of students. It is also acknowledged that elective and/or contextualised study beyond the core elements will lead to learning programmes with differing emphases.

The subject benchmark statement has been devised for a professional qualification at postgraduate level (SCQF level 11). Students undertaking this learning will be equipped to be effective, reflective practitioners able to drive forward policy and practice in the field of career **guidance**.

Potential audiences for the subject benchmark statement

- Those involved in designing, approving, accrediting or validating career **guidance** initial training and continuing professional development.
- Those who teach, assess and examine learners.
- Career **guidance** practitioners - advisers involved in career planning, employability/inclusion, workforce development and enterprise activities.
- Managers and mentors in employing organisations.
- Students working towards a qualification in career **guidance**.
- Those who provide opportunities for practice-based learning within career **guidance** organisations/services.
- Those who are responsible for the quality of career **guidance** services.
- Those who are responsible for continuing professional development.
- Members of other professions who may have an involvement in career **guidance** provision.

This subject benchmark statement has been produced following consultation with a wide range of organisations with an interest in career **guidance** in Scotland. These include Qualification in Career Guidance (QCG) course centres, professional bodies and associations, and potential employing organisations.

Context and vision for career guidance in Scotland

The Scottish Executive has recognised the economic value of career **guidance** through a variety of strategies and initiatives designed to invest in the workforce of the future, reduce economic inactivity among young people, improve productivity in the adult population and attract fresh talent to Scotland. People and their skills underpin employment, productivity, prosperity and social justice in Scotland.

Demographic changes are set to reduce the number of young people entering the labour market and lead to employers increasingly looking to older workers to fill skill shortage areas. Lifetime career planning in support of lifelong learning is an essential skill for individuals facing complex choices and requiring to develop personal career resilience.

Career **guidance** practitioners work with individuals of all abilities, ages and stages in life to help them fulfil their potential and access appropriate opportunities. In addition to helping individuals develop effective career planning skills, they can be involved in designing and delivering motivational activities to promote enterprising behaviour and combat the risk of social exclusion. As well as working in educational settings, practitioners are involved in workforce development and community engagement through effective partnership working. Career planning support is increasingly delivered at distance, particularly through e-guidance.

In order to meet these challenges, practitioners need to be highly skilled, knowledgeable, flexible and capable of delivering a wide range of services to a diverse client group. They need to practise ethically and be able to support capacity building in other organisations.
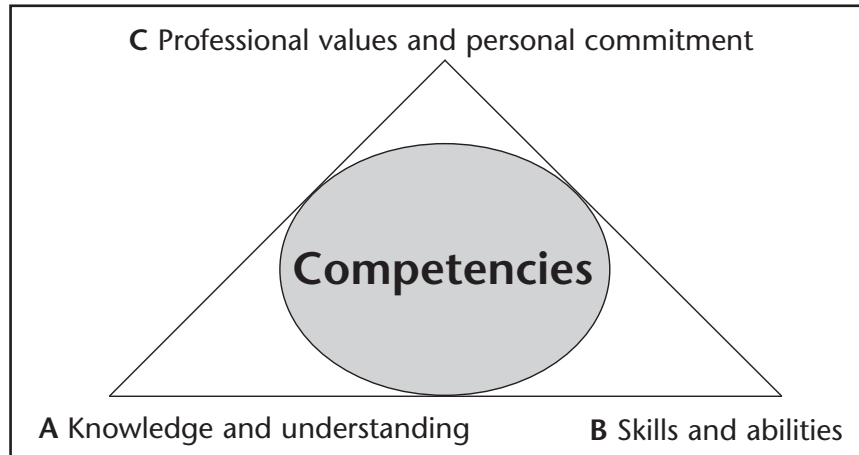
The content of career **guidance** qualifications needs to reflect the increasingly complex labour and learning markets in which practitioners operate and the existing and emerging skills required to deliver effective and responsive career **guidance** services to clients.

Features of career guidance qualifications

The professional competence of career **guidance** practitioners should be based on three inter-related areas:

- knowledge and understanding
- skills and abilities
- professional values and personal commitment.

Figure one: Aspects of professional preparation and development

The significance of placing these aspects of professional preparation within a triangle is to emphasise that they are not simply lists of competencies or outcomes. They are interdependent aspects of the professional preparation of the student. It is the relationship between the three aspects that constitutes a meaningful education and preparation for professional practice. The Benchmark statement has been constructed with this in mind. Programmes should be designed to give attention to each of these and to their interaction.

The subject benchmark statement is based on these key elements, and courses should provide a balance between these elements for the duration of the programme of study.

The linking of theory and practice is critical in the development of effective practitioners both in initial training and continuous professional development. Practice-based learning should be integrated throughout and the interface between academic input and learning in the field designed to be as productive and seamless as possible.

Reflective practice and critical enquiry to use and increase the evidence base will underpin course provision.

Requirements of a professional career guidance qualification

Although the subject benchmark statement is designed for initial training at postgraduate level, it is intended that options for achieving different levels of qualification be made available to individual learners taking into account previous experience, articulation routes and their personal requirements. Elective modules building on the core elements should also be made available to students within the practice-based year and as part of continuing professional development (CPD).

Clear and consistent links between theory and practice and the opportunity to practise and reflect on practical application of theoretical knowledge should be integral to course content/assessment activities. There will also be opportunities:

- to develop critical thinking, including research skills
- for progressive skill development with clients of all abilities, ages and stages in a variety of contexts
- to develop innovative approaches to career **guidance** with clients
- to develop and practise the skills of reflection and improve own professional practice
- to develop effective approaches to the promotion of career planning
- to develop and implement understanding of effective partnership working
- to develop and implement understanding of professional accountability and impact measurement techniques
- to relate theoretical knowledge and understanding of career **guidance** to specific work contexts.

Main indicators of acquired learning and effective application in the field

- An integration of theoretical knowledge and understanding with the development of practical application to approaches to career **guidance**.
- The development of reflective approaches to own practices as career **guidance** practitioners within an ethical framework.
- The development of research skills and commitment to contribute to the research base within the field of career **guidance**.
- Confidence and knowledge about the opportunities and strategies for developing more effective career **guidance** provision.
- Through practice-based assessment and related support systems, confidence to respond to more challenging career **guidance** issues effectively.
- Through practice-based assessment and support, confidence to acknowledge professional boundaries, manage cases/caseloads and refer appropriately.

Outline of a professional qualification in career guidance

Mandatory elements of a professional career **guidance** qualification at postgraduate level are:

- ethical and reflective practice
- career **guidance** theory and policy
- career **guidance** practice
- career-related learning
- career-related information
- partnership working
- labour and learning markets.

Benchmarking of a professional qualification in career guidance: standards for the award

The standard for the award outlines the key knowledge, skills and attitudes expected of students completing professional career **guidance** courses. The first column details the general learning focus with the related knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities and values and commitment in the following columns.

1   Ethical and reflective practice

Learning focus	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities	Values and commitment
Ethical principles and equal opportunities	Students will demonstrate an understanding of: • the ethical principles that apply to career **guidance** interventions • the relationship between personal belief, values and professional practice • strategies for upholding ethical practice • factors that can undermine ethical practice • the concepts of 'entitlement' and 'accountability' in relation to the key parties involved in the career **guidance** process • the boundaries and limits of own professional expertise including effects of own values and beliefs	Students will demonstrate the ability to: • evaluate, challenge and effectively manage own values, beliefs and reactions to ensure ethical practice is upheld • devise strategies and resources for upholding and promoting ethical practice and equal opportunities • constructively challenge unethical or oppressive behaviour/practice in others • critically analyse the equal opportunities policies and practices of service providers • implement ethical principles and equal opportunities practices in their daily work.	Students will demonstrate: • a commitment to ethical practice with regard to one's own practice • a willingness to consider opinions and beliefs that differ to one's own • a willingness to challenge others in cases of unethical or oppressive behaviour.

Learning focus	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities	Values and commitment
	• the rationale for, and major provisions of, legislation and codes of practice relating to equal opportunities and ethical practice, including child protection, data protection and confidentiality • different principles and approaches to equal opportunities and their implications for service providers • the ways that service providers incorporate Equal Opportunity legislation into policy and practice.		
Reflective practice	Students will demonstrate an understanding of: • what is meant by, and the importance of, reflective practice and CPD • the concept and value of evidence-based practice	Students will demonstrate the ability to: • give and receive effective feedback • gather evidence of own performance from a range of sources and accurately analyse own performance	Students will demonstrate: • a commitment to professionalism, personal improvement and CPD • a willingness to explore new or unfamiliar ideas and experiences

Learning focus	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities	Values and commitment
	• the potential sources of evidence and/or feedback to appraise own performance • the rationale for, and principles of, impact measurement and performance management • the principles and methods of evaluation • the concept and process of change • research methods.	• set and achieve targets and objectives for professional development • effectively use appropriate systems of supervision and support • conduct research into current practice • evaluate influences and changes in policy which may shape own practice • generate new ideas/approaches to inform own practice • respond positively and effectively to effect of change on oneself.	• an acceptance of one's own responsibility to engage in reflective practice and aim for continuous improvement. • the willingness to engage in constructive professional dialogue with other practitioners and parties.

2 Career guidance theory and policy

Learning focus	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities	Values and commitment
Career guidance theory and policy	Students will demonstrate an understanding of: • the rationale for models of career guidance, the context within which they developed and their value in maintaining and developing high quality career guidance practice • underpinning theoretical bases to career guidance including psychology, sociology and economics • theories of career choice, decision making and avoidance • different models/ approaches for supporting clients in their career planning • the implications of different theoretical perspectives in practice	Students will demonstrate the ability to: • critically evaluate theory • apply and tailor theory to own role and practice • critically evaluate relevant social policy.	Students will demonstrate: • a commitment to explore the contribution that theory can make to practice • a willingness to keep up to date with emerging career guidance theory and relevant developments in social policy.

Learning focus	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities	Values and commitment
	● the range and purpose of diagnostic and assessment tools in career guidance		
	● the rationale for, and methods of, assessing the needs of individuals and client groups to ensure that needs are met and resources allocated appropriately and cost effectively		
	● concepts of helping, enabling, empowerment and skill development		
	● the ways in which people manage change		
	● motivational theory and learning styles		
	● history and development of careers education and guidance, policy and practice in the UK		
	● public policy on career guidance, employability, lifelong learning and economic development in the UK		

Learning focus	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities	Values and commitment
	• contemporary policy forming processes		
	• the causes and nature of social exclusion and its relationship to social policy		
	• inclusion strategies for vunerable individuals and groups		
	• the benefits of career guidance - social, personal and economic		
	• the delivery of career guidance services in a range of policy and operational contexts including within the UK, EU and beyond.		

3 Career guidance practice

Learning focus	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities	Values and commitment
Individual interventions	Students will demonstrate an understanding of: • the different types of individual interventions and what they aim to achieve (eg diagnostic, career guidance, follow up) • appropriate models/approaches for the different types of intervention • the concepts of 'person-centred' practice • techniques for helping clients to develop effective career planning skills • the career planning needs of clients and how these may be identified and resolved • the need for, and the detail of, the strategic outcomes to be achieved in career guidance interventions	Students will demonstrate the ability to: • tailor the individual intervention to suit the context, needs and characteristics of the client • carry out an initial assessment of client need, including achievements to date, and select appropriate techniques or resources to meet that need • establish, maintain and develop effective communication within the individual intervention • establish a purposeful and professional relationship between adviser and client • clarify clients' expectations of the intervention and, if necessary, challenge these	Students will demonstrate: • a willingness to engage with clients in an open, honest and impartial way • a recognition of boundaries of professional competence and willingness to refer the client on to other sources of support when appropriate • an acceptance of the right of the client to request referral to another adviser • a commitment to ensure that the client knows that confidentiality will be respected and permission will be sought to pass on appropriate information in cases of referral.

Learning focus	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities	Values and commitment
	● how to tailor the intervention to a range of contexts and with clients of any level of ability, age, stage or status in life	● reach agreement with the client as to the aim, purpose and scope of the intervention	
	● how to engage effectively with clients using a range of delivery modes (eg face-to-face, telephone, e-guidance)	● assess, identify and agree the client's career planning needs with the client	
	● how to evaluate the effectiveness and measure the impact of career guidance interventions	● secure the client's commitment to addressing his/her needs	
	● the principles and processes of effective signposting, referral and advocacy	● identify and agree with the client a course of action to resolve his/her needs	
	● how to support the client to implement their career plan.	● agree and confirm with the client follow up action with timescales	
		● record outcomes of intervention	
		● evaluate and monitor effectiveness of intervention	
		● manage cases and caseloads effectively.	

Learning focus	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities	Values and commitment
Group work	Students will demonstrate an understanding of: - the rationale for working with groups - how to plan and deliver group work that is responsive to the needs of the audience and maximises learning - strategies for managing group dynamics and individual behaviour - a range of group work methods and their relative merits - how to evaluate the effectiveness of group work sessions.	Students will demonstrate the ability to: - plan and design work appropriate to the target audience - deliver and facilitate work with groups that is learner-centred and maximises opportunities for learning - use motivational techniques in a group setting - use appropriate and person-centred techniques and approaches - critically evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of work with groups to inform the group work planning process.	

4   Career-related learning

Learning focus	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities	Values and commitment
Career-related learning	Students will demonstrate an understanding of: ● the purpose, aims and benefits of career-related learning (including career and enterprise education) ● the policy context for career-related learning ● how learning organisations are responding to Government policies on career-related learning ● how to market/promote career-related learning in an engaging way to all clients, partners and key influencers ● the range of resources that exist that may be used to support the delivery of career-related learning ● how people learn - different learning styles, intelligence and personality types	Students will demonstrate the ability to: ● negotiate with partners their participation in career-related learning ● promote career-related learning within the wider curriculum of education and training providers ● promote career-related learning within community and workplace contexts ● use technology and innovative techniques to deliver career-related learning ● use motivational techniques to deliver career-related learning ● design effective career-related learning programmes and campaigns.	Students will demonstrate: ● a willingness to try innovative techniques to engage individuals and groups in career-related learning ● a willingness to engage proactively with employers and other partners to secure their commitment to and participation in career-related learning activities.

Learning focus	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities	Values and commitment
	• barriers to learning • how to measure the impact of career-related learning on clients • how to design, validate and evaluate career-related learning programmes and identify gaps in provision.		

5   Career-related information

Learning focus	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities	Values and commitment
Career-related information	Students will demonstrate an understanding of:	Students will demonstrate the ability to:	Students will demonstrate:
	● what is meant by career-related information	● identify accurately and explain the career-related information needs of staff, clients, partners and key influencers	● a commitment to promote use of career-related information to clients, partners and key influencers
	● the rationale for clients developing information management skills		
	● the range, sources and types of information which are, or should be, available to clients and their relative merits	● negotiate access to career-related information resources through partner organisations and intermediaries	● a willingness to work with colleagues and others to produce fit for purpose career-related products and services
	● the published policies, standards and guidelines for the provision of career-related information	● interpret information and tailor it to the needs of clients, partners and key influencers	● a commitment to widen clients' horizons by introducing them to unfamiliar new ideas and sources of information.
	● the role of career-related information, including labour market information, in career guidance and career-related learning	● support clients to access, interpret and utilise career-related information independently using a variety of media	
		● provide clients and others with appropriate information in a clear and useable format	

Learning focus	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities	Values and commitment
	• how to assist clients to access, interpret and utilise career-related information using a variety of media including information and communication technology • how to develop career-related information products and services using a variety of media • the implications of legislation relating to access to information and equal opportunities, eg provision of information in different languages, braille etc.	• collect and collate career-related information using various methodologies and technologies • understand, interpret and use appropriately local, national and international labour market information and trends.	

6 Partnership working

Learning focus	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities	Values and commitment
Partnership working	Students will demonstrate an understanding of: • the principles of effective partnership and team working • different types of collaborative working • the range of potential key partners/partnerships • the individuals, communities and organisations likely to form one's own network • the individuals and agencies holding key roles in helping to overcome barriers to learning and career planning • the ethical principles that should be upheld when working with other parties (internal and external) • how to manage conflict	Students will demonstrate the ability to: • build and sustain constructive working relationships with others (internal and external) • identify and realise opportunities to work collaboratively • manage conflict and disagreement through effective negotiation and mediation • challenge and effect change in the best interests of the client group • advocate on behalf of individual clients with agencies and individuals • engage constructively, directly or indirectly, with the client's social and family networks	Students will demonstrate: • a willingness to share both positive and negative experiences with others • a willingness to recognise, value and learn from the skills and expertise of colleagues in their own and other agencies • a willingness to cope with the unfamiliar and unexpected • respect for other organisations working in partnership to build trust and effective working relationships.

Learning focus	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities	Values and commitment
	• the principles, scope and use of referral and advocacy • the requirement to record and critically analyse the outcomes of referral, brokerage and advocacy • the role that social and family networks play in career planning and how to secure and maintain their productive involvement • the key policy developments that impact on partnership working • methods to help build the capacity of partners.	• engage partners in the promotion of career planning • develop and deliver training programmes for partner organisations • assess and diagnose partners' need for support • help partners agree shared objectives and plan of action • manage expectations • diagnose issues and give constructive feedback.	

7 Labour and learning markets

Learning focus	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities	Values and commitment
Labour and learning markets	Students will demonstrate an understanding of: ● education and training policy and systems in the UK in the context of lifelong learning ● European dimension to education and training including the European Qualification Framework ● operation of local, regional, national and international labour markets ● the role of Sector Skills Councils, Sector Skills Development Agency, economic development agencies in the UK and others ● the role of career guidance in lifelong learning and workforce development	Students will demonstrate the ability to: ● negotiate diplomatically with opportunity providers ● promote the benefits of career planning to learners, learning providers and to employers ● advocate effectively on behalf of learners, trainees and employees ● engage in career planning related activities in the workplace, eg career coaching, mentoring and redundancy counselling ● explain labour market opportunities and trends to clients, learning providers and employers	Students will demonstrate: ● a willingness to engage proactively with learning, training and employment providers ● a willingness to respond creatively to identified needs of opportunity providers and recipients ● a commitment to facilitate understanding between career guidance professionals, employers, learning and training providers ● a commitment to help learners/employers to understand the links and constraints between their own aspirationsand the opportunities available

Learning focus	Knowledge and understanding	Skills and abilities	Values and commitment
	• the role of career guidance in economic development and social inclusion • the role of advocacy in supporting learners, trainees and employees • the range of services that career guidance practitioners can offer to learning, training and employment providers • the methods of engaging with learning (both formal and informal), training and employment providers.	• explain the links between the career planning process (including implementation of career decisions) and the labour and learning markets • help clients prepare for entry into and success in learning and working environments.	