



AUSTRALIAN COLLABORATIVE
EDUCATION NETWORK

ACEN Response to National Career Development Strategy Green Paper

Prepared by ACEN National Executive

July 2012

Introduction

The Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) welcomes the opportunity to have input into the development of a National Career Development Strategy and strongly supports the underlying principle of having an overarching, lifelong National Career Development Strategy for Australians.

ACEN is the Australian peak body for work-integrated learning (WIL) in Australia and is internationally recognised as a leader in WIL practice, curriculum, research and scholarship. The ACEN vision is based on intentional collaboration with stakeholders including the higher education sector staff and students, industry partners, community and government representatives. WIL is viewed as a mechanism for connecting the theoretical and practical aspects of professional knowledge resulting in a well-rounded employee who has the ability to apply knowledge, skills in a diverse range of contexts (OECD, 2004). WIL includes all forms of collaborative education such as internships, cooperative education, work placements, industry based learning, community based learning, clinical rotations, sandwich year and practical projects. WIL also incorporates institutional based problem solving and simulations.

ACEN's focus for this paper is therefore on the opportunities for students to gain valuable career development through WIL in the tertiary sector and for employers to benefit from it.

ACEN would like to offer the following comments/suggestions on the Green Paper:

Development of frameworks

There is a need to extend and broaden the current career development framework, the Australian Blueprint for Career Development, to incorporate standards and competencies indicative of a higher education student. The current framework is not sufficiently comprehensive and has some critical elements of career development learning missing such as leadership, innovation, creativity and problem solving. It is also imperative to include global mobility and international capabilities as essential competencies for career development.

Recommendation 1: ACEN recommends the development of a new framework which incorporates higher order skills for career development learning catering for lifelong application.



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Work Integrated Learning (WIL)

WIL is recognised as a means of nurturing employability skills and career development learning in students when embedded in curriculum. There is a wealth of literature on the value of WIL and its benefits for students and employers. WIL is also a key mechanism for strengthening the role of business and industry in career development. The National Career Development Strategy Green Paper fails to acknowledge the importance of WIL nor is it included in the strategy.

A national strategy provides the ideal opportunity for DEEWR to recommend and support the inclusion of WIL in all courses. It should be recognised that integrating WIL in the curriculum is resource intensive and requires funding support and additional incentives.

Recommendation 2: ACEN strongly endorses the value of WIL in the curriculum as a mechanism for enhancing career development learning.

A National Internship Scheme

A National Career Development Strategy also provides an excellent opportunity to develop a national internship scheme which would benefit both employers and students. Headway was made in the Position Paper “A National Internship Scheme” published by Universities Australia in 2008. Whilst this paper did not adequately address all the issues it did highlight the importance of initiating an internship scheme at the national level.

Recommendation 3: A National Career Development Strategy should include a national internship scheme.

Articulating the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders

In the section “Articulating the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders” the role of business and industry focuses on apprenticeships and traineeships, but does not mention tertiary students. Tertiary students are pivotal to a sustainable and productive Australian economy and should be specifically included in a national strategy for career development.

ACEN supports the statement: “There may be a role for governments to provide opportunities for industry to engage more fully in career development and lifelong learning processes” and consider the government’s role to be critical to encourage employers to offer more WIL opportunities to tertiary students. The government support can be in the form of information, encouragement and incentives.

A national leadership body for career development

ACEN supports the formation of a national leadership body but believes There needs to be an additional focus on “Improving access to relevant WIL opportunities for tertiary students”. ACEN continues to be concerned by the evidence of inequitable participation and access to WIL opportunities by many cohorts of students in Australia



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Recommendation 4: ACEN recommends that access to WIL opportunities be an additional focus for the work of the national leadership body.

General comment

The tertiary sector produces graduates who are critical to ensuring a buoyant and competitive Australian economy. A National Career Development Strategy must incorporate developmental skills relevant to this cohort. An inclusive career development framework must acknowledge the value of WIL as part of the curriculum in facilitating career development learning. Such a strategy should also endorse a national internship scheme and encouragement for industry to provide WIL opportunities for students to ensure the development of career development competencies in an industry context.

ACEN would be pleased to collaborate with DEEWR and provide further input into any aspect outlined in this response to develop the final strategy.

ACEN National Executive

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