Careers New Zealand has led the development of a set of benchmarks to help schools develop effective practice and deliver high quality career education. This is a New Zealand first, and an important project for the careers sector and for our country.

Career education is vital to the future well-being of our young people and the economy of New Zealand. We are all responsible for improving the quality of career education in New Zealand so our young people have the competencies to manage their own careers. To this end the benchmarks are an important priority for Careers New Zealand.

Thank you to all of you who have been involved in the development and field testing of the draft benchmarks.

A self-review tool for the whole school community

The benchmarks are a self-review tool for schools that set high expectations for career education in New Zealand.

Under New Zealand’s model of school governance, responsibility for making decisions about career education is with the school itself. Trustees, senior managers, and careers leaders in schools each have a role to play to make career education successful. Our school system is diverse, and the benchmarks are designed to inform, not prescribe. Consequently, each school will need to determine the process they will follow when using the benchmarks.

Support materials will be available to help guide the self-review process and to assist schools to plan their career education programmes and services so they meet the needs of their students and communities.

Your feedback

Thank you to those of you who have taken time to provide feedback on the draft benchmarks. We received more than 60 submissions from schools, groups and individuals during our consultation process. This feedback has been collated and analysed by the project team, resulting in a substantially reworked set of benchmarks. Your feedback has greatly aided the development of this work.

What you had to say

Here is a sample of the comments we received from schools, groups and individuals during the consultation process.

- ‘It is not about adding more but simplifying what is there’
- ‘Have concerns about the reality of some of the benchmark measurements - they are aspirational’
- ‘It reflects the important aspects for career education in schools and could be valuable in changing practice if it can be used more easily’
- ‘Too many words, scales could be reduced, examples of activities/events for each category’
- ‘Integrating career education across the curriculum needs to be meaningful - not an exercise in ticking the ‘career’ box’
- ‘Up until now we have only had the guidelines to go on and they don’t say anything, are very unclear and that’s being polite. Schools are beginning to realise that it’s not about education for education’s sake - these students actually go somewhere, its about good transitions’
- ‘Creates a framework to work with - to self-review; creating senior management team and Board of Trustees accountability’
- ‘Presented in logical, step-by-step categories that makes it easy to know where we are and where we need to go. A useful tool for future planning - this is very timely. Dimensions phrased in a way that will make them fit well into charter, strategic plan, goals for annual plans, something for Education Review Office to use’
- ‘The benchmarks would be a good guide for a new career leader. They are a useful measure for our progress towards being highly effective’.
Feedback themes

Overall, feedback on the draft benchmarks was very supportive. The feedback centred mostly on the usability of the benchmarks, which has been summarised into the following themes:

1. **Length and clarity of language** - It was felt that the draft benchmarks were too long, and there was some duplication across dimensions and sub-categories. Suggestions included using more bullet points and clearer, more concise statements.

2. **Qualifications, time allocations and resourcing** – Questions were raised on the need for careers staff to hold qualifications and the level of resourcing required to deliver on the career programmes and services measures.

3. **Reality of the measurements** – There were concerns that the benchmarks were too aspirational and not realistic.

4. **Usefulness** – It was felt that the benchmarks would be a useful self-review and planning tool for the school, and it that provides a good framework for senior management and trustees to use.

5. **The role of the careers team and other managers within the school** - Questions were raised about where the responsibility should rest for developing career education within the school.

Changes that have been made

As a result of feedback, the main changes that have been made are:

- The number of dimensions was reduced from five to four – ‘Strategic planning' has been merged into 'Leadership', and 'Programmes and services' to improve clarity.
- Improved readability – removal of repetition, and more use of plain English statements and bullet points. More use of bolding to show differences and guide reading.
- A more logical flow has been established by moving or amalgamating some sub-categories.
- Clearer progressions across each level.
- The 'Student outcomes' dimension has only two columns – competent and highly competent – reducing the complexity of the document.
- An introductory section that includes: links to government initiatives such as Ka Hikitia and Pacific Education Plan, reference to NAG 1.6, target groups, and a guide for the reader on how to use the document.
- Increased Māori content integrating the Measurable Gains Framework from the Ministry of Education.

These changes were reviewed on 7 September 2011 by the project’s external reference group who supported the progress being made. Since then the working draft has continued to be developed by the project team as they finalise the benchmarks for launching.

We still have more work to complete, however to give you an indication of our progress and the changes that have been made, please visit [www.careers.govt.nz/benchmarks](http://www.careers.govt.nz/benchmarks) to download the Student Career Management Competencies dimension - At the very heart of our work are the needs of the students.

Next steps

We will launch the benchmarks early in Term Four, 2011. Careers New Zealand is currently reviewing its services and resources for schools to ensure they effectively support the new set of benchmarks.

Supporting resources and services will be available for schools from Term One, 2012.

We welcome your comments

Careers New Zealand intends to review the benchmarks each year to ensure that they are up-to-date and informed by school practice and future research.

If you have any further comments or questions on the benchmarks please email [dale.bailey@careers.govt.nz](mailto:dale.bailey@careers.govt.nz).

Further information

Who has been involved?

The benchmarks are a significant development for the careers sector and from the outset Careers New Zealand took an open, inclusive and iterative development approach in consultation with the wider sector. Throughout the development process we have received much feedback and support from a broad range of groups from across the education sector.

To guide our work an external reference group was established with representation from Careers and Transition Education Association (CATE), Post Primary Teachers Association, School Support Services, the Industry Training Federation, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Ministry of Education, Principals and the School Trustees Association. This group has met three times to review the project and examine drafts of the benchmarks and the feedback received. In addition to our own consultation, members of the external reference group conducted their own consultation which has been fed into the process.

Careers New Zealand seconded Auckland CATE president Catherine Stephens to manage the development of the benchmarks. Catherine holds a Masters in Career Development and has extensive experience as a teacher and in the careers field. Catherine has worked with Dale Bailey, Project Executive and a team of Careers New Zealand staff who are experienced in working in and with schools.

Field testing of the benchmarks was conducted in 30 schools (a mix of state, integrated, single-sex, co-ed, rural, urban and kura kaupapa) across the country by Careers New Zealand. Twenty cluster meetings and two information sessions were held with careers advisors from across New Zealand to gain feedback and advice on the draft benchmarks. We have also shared our work on the benchmarks across the education sector through media, presentations, newsletters and the internet.