



ACADEMIC PROCEDURES HANDBOOK

for

Sri Lankan Universities

PART II

CODE OF PRACTICE ON CAREER GUIDANCE

Committee of Vice-Chancellors & Directors
and
University Grants Commission

Edited & Printed

by

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PURPOSE OF THE HANDBOOK

This handbook is complementary to the Quality Assurance Handbook published by the CVCD and UGC in July 2002. Both handbooks are the result of collaborative work undertaken between the CVCD/UGC, universities and professional bodies in 2002 and 2003. This work builds on the successful project begun in 2001 to develop and implement a comprehensive quality assurance system for Sri Lankan higher education.

The Academic Procedures Handbook is made up of following six parts:

- Part I: Code of Practice on Assessment of Students;
- Part II: Code of Practice on Career Guidance;
- Part III: Code of Practice on External Assessors;
- Part IV: Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Programmes;
- Part V: Code of Practice on Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review;
- Part VI: Code of Practice on Student Support and Guidance

The purpose of the Academic Procedures Handbook is to provide a reference point for all universities, covering the main aspects of academic standards and the quality of education. The six Codes reflect consensus amongst universities and other groups on the key elements of good practice, which support the student learning experience.

The Codes may be added to over time, to reflect developments in Universities and Nationally.

The existence of an Academic Procedures Handbook providing guidance on good practice at National level greatly facilitates the implementation of Quality Assurance mechanisms and the sustenance and enhancement of quality in the Universities within the overarching quality framework described at the end of the book. Individual universities will be expected to use the Academic Procedures Handbook to guide their own developing practice and to supplement it with local handbooks that reflect particular context and requirements of individual institutions.

PART II: CODE OF PRACTICE ON CAREER GUIDANCE

Foreword

As part of its programme of work, the CVCD/UGC Quality Assurance Committee has developed Codes of Practice covering key aspects of quality assurance in higher education.

This is one of six Codes, all of which have been developed in consultation with university staff through workshops and seminars during 2002 and 2003.

Purpose

The Codes are intended to be used:

- to guide and inform institutional activity;
- to promote and disseminate good practice;
- to encourage a commitment to continuous improvement.

Structure

Each Code is divided into three sections, covering general principles, institutional by-laws and regulations and specific guidance. Some have additional appendices, where more detail is required.

Development

The Codes are intended to be dynamic documents, which continue to develop over time. This will enable them to take account of national developments and to capture changing university practice.

Feedback is therefore invited on any aspect of the Codes.

Introduction

The Code of Practice on Career Guidance is intended to help universities to ensure that:

- they are meeting students' expectations in preparing them for their future career.
- they are producing graduates who are equipped to be successful, flexible and adaptable in the employment market.

Development of the Code has taken place with the assistance of academic and support staff working in Sri Lankan higher education and is intended to provide a framework for career guidance within which institutions can work.

The employment market is changing in ways that make it more important than ever before for students and graduates to take responsibility for managing their career development. To achieve this successfully, they need to develop career management skills, being able:

- to reflect on their individual learning, practice and personal development;
- to plan effectively and make timely and good decisions;
- to be proficient in using a range of information technology applications;
- to create and take opportunities;
- to prepare themselves for lifelong learning.

Other skills graduates need for successful careers are:

- to be able to communicate effectively and articulately, orally and in writing;
- to work successfully as part of a team;
- to be able to assess their own performance accurately and to know when to ask for help;
- to be able to continue to develop in their career.

Career guidance is one of the components of the support that students need while studying at university. It is important that career education, information and guidance and the development of employability and career management skills are considered as interdependent parts of a whole area of support provided for students.

The role of technology (Information and Communication Technology - ICT) is crucial to the effective provision of career advice and guidance, and for communicating career opportunities to students and graduates. Universities need to ensure that their strategy for ICT provides a sustainable basis for the communication of career-related information for students and access; especially graduates who need to access this information remotely.

Universities need to make clear to students and graduates their entitlements in terms of career guidance and information at the various stages in their career, during their programme and after graduation. Separate provision for first degree graduates and postgraduates is often advisable. In making information available to students and graduates, universities should demonstrate their commitment to equality of opportunity and access.

It is important that there is an institution-wide commitment to preparing students for their future career. This involves the integration of skills development, especially those in career management, with programmes of study, which should be supported through the university's learning and teaching strategy, or equivalent. Successful integration will involve developing and maintaining strong links between career guidance and information services, academic departments, personal tutors, admission tutors, student employment offices and other student support and welfare services.

Career staff should ensure that there are productive and cordial links between universities and external agencies and organizations, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. They should also foster good relationships with a wide range of employers, some of whom should be encouraged to participate in career events for students and graduates.

The guidance this Code contains is outlined in three sections:

- A. General principles
- B. Institutional by-laws and regulations
- C. Specific guidance

The Code sets out a framework within which institutions are expected to develop their own procedures and practice, consistent with the overall guidance in the Code.

A. General Principles

1. Institutions should have a clear written, accessible policy for career education, information and guidance, including aims and objectives and details of students' entitlements.
2. Career guidance should be impartial, student focused, personal, and easily accessed by students and should meet equal opportunities policies. It should cater for students with special needs, and generally be focused on those who may be disadvantaged in the labour market.
3. Institutions should have a mechanism for assuring the quality of career guidance.

B. Institutional By-Laws and Regulations

4. Each university should ensure that career guidance is provided by a unit or group that reports to one or more of its senior academic planning committees. Membership of the group should include at least one representative from each faculty, for example faculty career guidance officers.
5. The unit should have a board or steering group whose membership includes alumni and representatives from outside academia, e.g. employers in industry and professional organizations.
6. The institution should ensure that its Information and Communications Technology provision facilitates distant/distributed access to career advice and guidance.
7. In line with UGC advice, all students should be required to take a career guidance module during their programme of study.

C. Specific Guidance

Institutions should provide specific guidance in relation to career activities under the following headings:

8. Students

8.1. *Career-related Skills and Knowledge*

Students should have access to seminars, workshops, meetings with potential employers, chambers of commerce, and any other activities that provide them with career-related skills and knowledge.

Students should also have access to printed materials and other resources, e.g. video, CD-ROM, etc., to enable them to see practically what a career choice might entail in practical terms.

They should be supported by a career guidance officer, at faculty level and also at university level, through the career guidance unit.

Career guidance should be available to students from the second semester of the first year until the end of their programme of study.

Career guidance units should work with faculties and schools to ensure that there is a career orientation programme in each faculty, and that career guidance modules are integral to each student's programme.

8.2. *Range of Services Available*

Each university's career guidance unit should develop web-based databases covering career opportunities and contacts, employment and placement opportunities and self-employment information and skills.

In addition, career guidance units should publish newsletters, notices about employment opportunities, and posters advertising the range of opportunities and services they provide.

Students should be encouraged to participate in practical career-related activities, including: experience of and advice on drafting a curriculum vitae/presenting bio-data, employer aptitude tests, mock interviews, etc.

8.3. *Accessibility*

Career guidance units should have opening hours that are convenient for student access, providing as much flexibility as possible.

Students should be given wide access to information technology that enables them to use the

career databases at all times.

Workshops, seminars, career guidance days, etc should be arranged at times that are suitable for students and they should be held at locations that are widely accessible to students.

Career guidance units should, wherever possible, liaise with student union officers to maintain and improve accessibility for students to career materials and events.

8.4. References for Students

It should be the responsibility of each university's career guidance unit to encourage closer relationships between teachers and students and to raise student awareness of the need for references when they seek employment or further training.

Career guidance officers might wish to issue career-oriented certificates, to students or their heads of department, to record students' involvement in career-related activities.

9. External Relations

9.1. Collaboration with employers, external organizations and other groups

Career guidance units should work with employers to ensure students have up to date information about employer requirements.

They should use their contacts with external organizations to help students to establish career oriented societies and clubs.

Wherever possible, employers and alumni should be invited to work with career guidance units to offer practical activities for students, e.g. employers offering mock interviews, or alumni returning to the university to talk about their chosen career.

Students wishing to pursue an academic research career should be given guidance as to the opportunities available in their subject, both academic and financial. Career guidance units should work in partnership with academic departments to provide advice on research career.

9.2. Placements and Work Experience

Career guidance units should facilitate placement opportunities and work experience for students, making available details of vacancies through websites, newsletters and posters.

They should be pro-active in establishing links with a range of employers, to try to cater for as wide a range of career as possible. It is recognized that there are some limitations to be overcome in this area, in particular geographical constraints.

9.3. Publication of Information

Career guidance units should use the media listed above in 8.2 (databases, newsletters, notices about employment opportunities and posters) and 8.3 (information technology, workshops, seminars and career guidance days), to publicize external relations and enable students to contact employers and other external bodies directly.

10. Staff

Career guidance units have been established in all universities.

Staff should have opportunities for specialized career training, locally and overseas and staff development programmes for new academic staff should include elements on providing good career guidance.

There should be awareness programmes in career guidance for existing staff, to keep them up to date with career knowledge and skills generally, as well as subject-related career information.

Staff in academic departments should be the principle source of advice on academic research career in the relevant subjects.

11. Monitoring, Feedback, Evaluation and Improvement

11.1. Incorporation of Feedback from Employers

Career guidance units should try to encourage employer feedback at every opportunity, although this may sometimes be difficult to arrange.

Employers could be asked to complete a short, structured questionnaire, which may be more practical to administer than other methods and provide useful information about the qualities they are looking for in their graduate employees.

Practical employer links are desirable, such as asking employers to conduct mock interviews (see final paragraph of 8.2 above), or to give presentations.

11.2. Evaluation of progress against objectives and targets. All career guidance units should have a strategy and action plan, which should be reviewed and, if necessary, updated annually.

The annual report produced by each unit should map progress and achievements against targets set in the action plan.

11.3. Annual Reports

Annual reports should, in addition to evaluating progress against targets, outline new developments and directions in the unit's work.

If the career guidance unit has a steering group, or a career board to which it reports, the annual report should be considered and approved by that body.

11.4. Data Collection and Presentation

Career guidance units should ensure that statistical data on student destinations and career is collected annually.

A mechanism should be found that enables graduates to respond in a timely manner to a brief set of questions about the next step in their career following university.

The data arising from graduate feedback should be analyzed and presented annually as part of each career guidance unit's annual report (see above).

In addition, career guidance units should be responsible for undertaking tracer studies on alumni of the university, using a sampling process. This will enable them to track trends, ask the alumni how well their education prepared them for their career, and to maintain useful links so that alumni can be asked to provide input to career activities.