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# COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR CAREER PROFESSIONALS

## ABSTRACT

The Finnish Institute for Educational Research (FIER) at the University of Jyväskylä has prepared a proposal for the competency descriptions of guidance professionals as part of the national development project on lifelong guidance, coordinated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, and the Development and Administration Centre.

Several hundred guidance professionals participated in co-creation of the competence descriptions, including practitioners from all levels of education, public and private employment services, youth services, guidance professionals' organisations, student organisations, training units, ministries, regional and public administrations, and expert bodies.

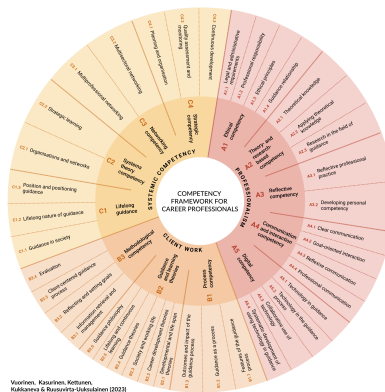
The Proposal for the *National Competency Framework for Career Professionals* consists of three main areas: professionalism, client work, and systemic competency. Together these provide a foundation for the competency of professionals working in different lifelong guidance settings and a tool for competency assessment and development. The descriptions consist of 12 competence areas which are divided into more detailed smaller parts.

Since 2005 the European Union (EU) member states have acknowledged the professionalisation of career guidance services in different sectors as one of the priorities within the guidance systems and policy development. According to the Finnish National Strategy for Lifelong Guidance 2020–2023 (Valtioneuvosto, 2020), Finland has a strongly professionalised system of guidance by international standards, but the professional titles and qualifications of those working in the field vary. As a development proposal, the strategy presented the need to draw up national descriptions of the core and special competency of guidance work to improve the quality of guidance and strengthen the professionalism of the field. Guidance competency refers to the knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes required to undertake lifelong guidance roles and tasks in whichever setting career guidance is provided (ELPGN, 2015).

## JOINT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The development of national competency descriptions is based on a literature review that examined international and national competency descriptions for guidance work, which have proven to be relevant regardless of the context or ways in which guidance services are organised. Based on the most recent national initiatives (e.g. Australia, Canada, Germany, Norway, Scotland) and competency frameworks by international organisations (e.g. IAEVG, NCDA, APCDA) a draft proposal was drafted for consultation among the Finnish guidance community representatives.

Between February 2022 and June 2023 altogether 665 guidance professionals participated in 12 workshops to reflect the proposed draft competence descriptions, including practitioners from all levels of education, public and private employment services, youth services, guidance professionals' organisations, student organisations, training units, ministries, regional and public administrations, and expert bodies. The evolving draft proposal was available online for public consultation during this joint development process. The workshops also reflected the current trends in the society and working life which have impact in the guidance systems and practices. Based on the feedback a new proposal for competency framework was constructed and pilot tested in workshops with training units and with a group of career professionals from different settings.



Vuorinen, Kasurinen, Kettunen, Kukkaneva & Ruusuvirta-Uuksulainen (2023)

Competency framework for career professionals.

## COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR CAREER PROFESSIONALS

The competency framework consists of three main areas: professionalism, client work and systemic competency. Together these three main areas form a strong foundation for the shared competency of professionals working in different settings in lifelong guidance. The competency descriptions consist of 12 competency areas, which are divided into more detailed smaller parts. The competency area describes the individualised competency needed in the work of a career professional now and in the future. Each competency area consists of related key competency descriptions, which ensure that the transversal competency required by each competency area is taken into account.

## ONLINE TOOL FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR CAREER PROFESSIONALS

The online assessment tool (Kettunen et al., 2023) based on the competency descriptors are designed to support guidance professionals, teams, networks, and organisations in two key areas of competency development: *self-assessment and planning and monitoring*. The package comprises of three separate forms: an assessment table, a competency map, and a competency development planning form. The competency assessment tool can be used to assess the level of competency against the specified competency descriptions. The competency map provides a visual presentation of the current competency level in various competency areas. If so desired, the same competency map can be used to set competency goals. The competency development planning form provides a structure for setting goals, planning concrete development measures, and monitoring their implementation over time.



## COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK AS A BASIS FOR COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

The competency framework can be used to examine both professional qualification requirements and competency in different tasks of guidance. A guidance professional does not need to have deep knowledge of all areas of expertise. Combinations of different competency areas form the required specific competency for career professionals and organisations, which can be developed as a whole or deepened for some competency areas, if necessary. This competency framework for career professionals can be utilised, for example, as follows:

- Competency assessment: Professionals can evaluate their strengths and identify development needs.
- Training program planning: It informs the design of initial and ongoing training initiatives.
- Personal competency development: Professionals can pinpoint areas for further training.
- Job description clarification: It defines roles and expectations in the guidance field.
- Comparison and benchmarking: Facilitates comparisons among professionals to promote best practices.
- Service improvement: Helps improve client service skills and guidance for the clients
- Improving the quality and effectiveness of guidance: Organisers and funders of guidance services can utilise competency framework in defining job descriptions for guidance workers, recruiting professionals, as procurement criteria in outsourced services, and in assessing the quality and effectiveness of services.

In summary, the National Competency Framework for Career Professionals is a valuable tool for those working in the field of guidance. It helps define qualification requirements, improve services, and support skills development. Its use promotes the competency of career professionals and higher quality and more effective guidance for clients.

## REFERENCES:

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<https://peda.net/careerprof>

