

CENTRES FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND STUDENT COUNSELLING AT SERBIAN UNIVERSITIES – BASIC SERVICES

Current trends for developing different student services aiming at improvement of studies and representing the system of support to different student needs, a need for a more intensive cooperation with the industry, alarming percentage of students giving up their studies, too long duration of studies, a high unemployment rate are some of the reasons why state and private universities in Serbia have established centres for students' career development. Establishment and development of centres in certain cases represented a part of universities' strategy to encourage the development of skills ensuring a sustainable employment.

The first career development centres were established in Serbian universities during the period from 2006 to 2007 upon initiative of Crown Prince Alexander II Foundation for Education and Culture and with the support of the University in Nottingham. The Career Development Centre of the University of Belgrade was established at the end of 2006, and during 2007, career development centres were established in the state universities in Kragujevac, Novi Sad and Niš. All of these centres were established under the Decisions of Councils of parent universities as organizational units within their composition. The similarity in their work certainly results from integrated training for work in the centres which the participants attended in Great Britain, as well as from the training subsequently organized by the Career Development Centre in the University of Belgrade one year after the work in the centres in the University in Novi Sad, Kragujevac and Niš, in accordance with verified experience of its positioning at the university and within the business community, work with students and employers and developing programs adjusted to Serbian students and graduates. During 2011 and 2012, new career development centres were established in the state universities in Novi Pazar, Kosovska Mitrovica and in the private University of Megatrend. Centres established at private universities have taken a slightly different development path. Singidunim University established the Career Development Centre owing to a successful implementation of the project for competitiveness development, financially supported by the USAID.

The table below shows current units or services at university centres for career development and student counselling, as well as a short description of each of them.

	UBG ¹⁰	UNS ¹¹	UNI ¹²	UKG ¹³	USGD ¹⁴
Career Information	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Career Counselling	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Career Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Liaison with the business world	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

¹⁰ Center for Career Development and Student Counselling of the University in Belgrade

¹¹ Center for Career Development and Student Counselling of the University in Novi Sad

¹² Center for Career Development and Student Counselling of the University in Niš

¹³ Center for Career Development and Student Counselling of the University in Kragujevac

¹⁴ Center for Career Development and Student Counselling of Singidunum University and Career Centre FEFA

Career Information

Career information is a group of activities oriented to offering information on career opportunities, educational institutions and programs – formal and informal, educational profiles, as well as information on the labour market, occupations, possibilities and perspectives of employment and career development. Career information is a precondition for an adequate decision-making and selection of direction of education and selection of occupation, therefore its function, among other things, is the prevention of making decisions based on insufficiently studied available opportunities and possibilities.

Career information activities are conducted directly and indirectly through different media - interviews, tribunes, workshops, brochures, manuals, Internet, presentations, public information media, education fairs, practical work and employment.

Career Counselling

Career counselling represents a group of activities aiming at providing support to individuals to make decisions on the type of work they want to do, to make the choice among alternatives, to find a job and be successful at work, make career changes, continue education or choose additional studying and training. Efficient career counselling is the counselling directed to a personal development of an individual, starting from the individual and his/her needs and capabilities, encouraging him/her to research his/her own potentials, as well as opportunities for studying and/or employment.

Career counselling has been subject to numerous changes in terms of theoretical and practical approach since its beginnings. Modern changes in economy and at the labour market result in a different recognition and experience of a career and success, and therefore in the function and nature of career counselling. Career counsellor is not an expert or professional with all the answers and solutions any more, but his role consists of helping an individual in developing skills and competencies for taking over responsibility for his/her career decisions and for becoming more aware of alternatives and available resources on the path towards the achievement of his/her objectives and desires.

Career counselling may be conducted through different forms of individual and group work, using numerous techniques for psychological assessment and self-assessment of individuals and their potentials, lightening their needs and interests and facilitation of decision-making. On the other hand, counselling interventions in combination with educational aim at improving practical skills required for active and independent job seeking, and/or opportunities for education and professional advancement.

Career Education

Career education refers to the activities assisting young people in the improvement of their knowledge and skills which they need to make professional choices and changes, and/or to understand themselves and impacts they are exposed to, to research career opportunities, to learn to plan and accept changes through life. Career education aims at training an individual to take over the responsibility for his/her own career and professional development, facilitating inclusion of an individual in the world of work, as well as other professional advancement – vertically and horizontally.

Modern comprehension of career education is based on a new paradigm of career guidance. According to this paradigm, career guidance does not refer to the problem of making one and “right” career choice, but to “equipping” individuals with skills that will enable them a continuous making choices required for

responding to constant and rapid changes at the labour market, as well as so that they could maintain the balance between business (work) and other life roles.

Career education can be conducted through different programs – lectures, courses, seminars, trainings, etc. It is related to career information and counselling and makes an integral part thereof, therefore it is often difficult to make a clear difference between them and define where one activity ends and where the other begins.

Liaison with the World of Business

Liaison with the world of business integrates the elements of career information, counselling and education. Through a series of different organizational forms and methods, the liaison with the world of business means ensuring and making opportunities for direct and indirect contacts of students with employers, their approximation and exchange of experience from which both students/graduates and employers will have benefits. Benefits for students are reflected in their obtaining information and advice which might be crucial for their further career development. On the other hand, benefits for employers are reflected in their better information on characteristics of future staff and review of their competences acquired during studies.

Activities within liaison with the business world include organization of practical work, short and long visits to companies, organization of formal and informal meetings of students and business world representatives, organization of educational programs within which business world representatives act in the capacity of lecturers, etc.

Sources:

1. *Strategy of Career Guidance and Counselling in the Republic of Serbia*, the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Serbia, 2010.
2. Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 21 November 2008 on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies, *Official Journal of the European Union*, retrieved on February 20, 2012 from: <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:319:0004:0007:EN:PDF>
3. *Basic Elements of Career Counselling*, N. E. Amundson, J. Harris-Bowlsbey & S. J. Niles, Belgrade Open School, 2010.