

NATIONAL

CAREERS WEEK

IN THE CAPS CURRICULUM

The National Careers Week (NCW) programme was launched as an inter-departmental career exhibition programme by the Minister of Higher Education and Training in 2021. The NCW programme has evolved through an extensive 3-year consultation process within the basic education sector, supported by the Education for Employability (E4E) programme, funded by the European Union (EU). The restructured NCW programme, planned for re-launch in 2026, is based on two mutually agreed principles, with the first being “in school only”, and the second being “term 3 week 8”.

At present, most rural and marginalised schools are excluded from career exhibitions due to the demand being greater than the supply. These schools receive few community guests as part of the academic calendar. Furthermore, while only a small group of secondary learners are selected for career exhibitions, hosting career activities in-school can include all learners in some manner each year. The second principle of term 3 week 8 relates to the time in the school curriculum that has been identified for careers week for all grades. This week was selected through a consultative process as part of the E4E programme.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) intends, as part of the curriculum strengthening process, to take the content for sustainable livelihoods, i.e. entrepreneurship and careers, in every subject and place it in that week to galvanise career education in the curriculum. Guidelines to assist schools in the implementation of careers week for all grades have been developed, and the DBE has already incorporated careers week into the vocational and occupational streams of secondary education. The next NCW2026 focus will be on teacher guides, lesson plans, and learner workbooks, to further streamline the process.

A recent development, by suggestion of the DBE and DHET, is for the re-launch to include a virtual exhibition for schools, due to expanding access to technology and data. The virtual programme will include key stakeholders from post-school education and training to industry, who will avail themselves for different segments during the week. One example of the power of this service is the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL), who have over 250 HPCSA registered employment counsellors who could provide online career guidance and counselling during that week.

It should be noted that careers week is intended as a seven (7) day programme, and schools are encouraged to host community members, such as parents and those not in employment, education or training, over the weekend. The NCW steering committee is also considering a provincial celebration to take place on a rational basis. Further to celebrating and awarding school-based best practices, the provincial event would also showcase activities that schools could initiate with community partners, such as speed interviews and try-a-skill, for example.