

people in print

SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

Review of Recognition and Certification Models
for the Printing and Graphic Communications
Industry



ABOUT CPISC

The Canadian Printing Industries Sector Council (CPISC) provides a national forum for collaboration on human resource and workforce development issues within the printing and graphic communications industry. Incorporated in April 2006, CPISC's mission is to identify and implement strategies to address skills development and learning within the sector. Our overall goal is to improve the quality of the sector's labour force.

The guiding principle within CPISC is partnership. We bring together employers, employees, unions, education and government to develop innovative approaches to skills development for the current and future workforce of this technology-based industry. The intent of CPISC is not to duplicate what exists but to build on what is currently being done and to develop on a national basis the programs and services that will meet the human resource development needs of the industry as a whole.

INTRODUCTION

The industry has its challenges, which include rapid technological change, a geographically dispersed and demographically varied workforce, changing demographics, and a lack of skill standards. The printing and graphic communications industry has embraced technology but this has resulted in an urgent and continued need to upgrade and retrain current workers. There is also the ever-present desire to attract bright, motivated young people to this vibrant industry.

To compete effectively in the emerging environment, printing and graphic communications firms need a highly skilled workforce – one in which workers hold a broad range of skills and knowledge, including higher technical skills. Specifically, firms will increasingly require adaptable, multi-skilled workers who can operate computers, analyse problems, make decisions, work cooperatively, interact with customers and who have a solid understanding of the entire printing production process.

Certification is an accepted means of recognizing that a worker has the knowledge and skills to complete the work. There are many advantages to certification. For example, certification improves labour mobility in that certified workers have the opportunity to use their credentials to seek employment anywhere in Canada. It helps to improve the overall quality of work since certification is based on an agreed-upon Canadian standard, established and set by the industry to meet its particular needs. Because certification is an industry-led initiative, the credential has meaning and relevance. It is also a way of seeking and keeping motivated workers, raising the level of professionalism and promoting career development.

REVIEW OF RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION MODELS

As a priority, the industry determined that there is a need for agreed-upon standards to inform and support quality training and retraining and the links between employers and employees and education and training providers. The development of skill standards and profiles provides a basis for exploring models for recognition and certification.

While the proposed project is not a continuation of an existing CPISC project, it builds upon the work currently being done on our building blocks. Once skill standards have been developed, the logical next step is to recognize individuals who meet the agreed-upon standards defining competence in the printing and graphic communications sector. Certification is one way of recognizing a highly skilled workforce. It is an industry-recognized credential granted to a candidate upon successful demonstration of competence. More specifically, a worker must demonstrate that he or she has the knowledge and skills to complete the work, as defined by the national skill standards for the industry.

There are a few known elements as we begin to explore how best to develop a national recognition program for the printing and graphic communications sector.

- Certification differs from an institution's degree or diploma in that it is a professional designation based on industry standards and experience rather than mandatory training.
- The intent of certification would be to recognize individuals who demonstrate competence rather than to regulate or control practice. For this reason, whatever recognition process is determined may need to be voluntary – in other words, it would not be a requirement for an employee to be certified in order to work in the industry.
- A recognition program could include a formal process of assessment to confirm that a candidate has the required skills and knowledge to perform the job competently. This could take the form of a knowledge-based assessment whose content would be derived from the national skill standards for the industry. As well, a performance-based component could confirm that an individual can demonstrate his or her ability to perform the skills in the workplace. This approach is consistent with recognized large-scale testing methodology (e.g. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD/PISA); Council of Ministers of Education, Canada's Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (CMEC/PCAP); Second Information Technology in Education Study (SITES)).
- It could also include a prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) component. While PLAR is most often associated with an academic credential, an individual could provide evidence (perhaps through the use of a portfolio or e-portfolio) that documents how he or she meets the skill standards determined by the industry.

While the above may be known elements, there remain a number of issues that need to be discussed and determined by the sector before a national recognition program can be developed:

- What would be the advantages and disadvantages for the sector in establishing a national recognition program? What are the options and models available to the sector?
- If the sector chooses to move forward to establish a national recognition program, who would administer it? How would it work? How can a national recognition program be linked to learning needs?
- Is there a role for the Formally-Affiliated Regional Associations (FARAs), le Comité sectoriel de main-d'œuvre des communications graphiques du Québec, provincial and territorial governments, unions and educational institutions? If so, what should it be?

As well, in order to provide workers with formal opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills, CPISC will need to work with the education sector to ensure that the articulation between work and education is seamless. Building on the industry's agreed-upon skill standards, the training needs assessment and a well-defined certification model, CPISC will then be in a good position to work with the education sector to develop a program accreditation model.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The overall objectives of the project are to:

- Review recognition and certification models within the printing and graphic communications sector and related sectors to identify two or three appropriate/successful models
- Explore with the sector the need and support for a recognition and certification program
- If the sector chooses to go forward, determine an appropriate recognition and certification model for the printing and graphic communications sector, setting out development and implementation costs and timelines
- Implement a recognition and certification program for the printing and graphic communications sector

PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND TIMELINES

A multi-phased approach will be used to determine the best means to recognize individuals in the industry and develop protocols, processes and procedures for a national recognition program for the printing and graphic communications sector. Phase I will run from August 5, 2008 to January 31, 2009 and will be used to inform and shape Phases II and III.

As CPISC moves to develop a national recognition program, buy-in from the industry will be critical. Hence, throughout the development process, the industry will be consulted and given opportunities to validate the concepts and eventually, the program itself. As well, a comprehensive communications strategy will be developed to ensure that the industry as a whole is aware of what is being planned and offers its input.

It will also be important for CPISC to work with the education sector, to begin to lay the groundwork for the development of an accreditation program model that builds on the industry's agreed-upon skill standards, identified training needs and delivery models and a well-defined certification model.

Phase I – Conduct and explore options, identifying two or three appropriate models

- Conduct an environmental scan of the strategies used by similar organizations in Canada (e.g. sector councils, le Comité sectoriel de main-d'œuvre des communications graphiques du Québec, ministries/departments of education) and abroad (e.g. PIA/GATF in the US, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority's National Certificate in Printing, work done in the Netherlands, UK and Germany) as well as certification programs offered by certain suppliers (e.g. Heidelberg's Print Media Academy, AGFA's Competence Center)
- Using LMI data, identify potential occupations for certification, based on the number of persons in given occupations

- Identify the most effective strategies (e.g. surveys, consultation meetings, one-on-one interviews) for obtaining valid feedback from all key stakeholders
- Develop two or three potential recognition and certification models, including development and implementation costs and timelines for discussion purposes
- Confirm the approach and two or three potential recognition and certification models with the project working group, in preparation for broader consultations with sector.

Phase II – Develop protocols, processes and procedures for a national recognition program. Develop protocols, processes and procedures for a national recognition program for the printing and graphic communications sector, which includes objectives; policies, procedures, and governance structures; underlying psychometric principles; development, maintenance and administration costs; ownership, pricing and revenue considerations; partnership modalities and protocols

Phase III - Implement the preferred model

AND THIS PROJECT WILL LEAD TO...

At the end of this project, CPISC will have developed a national recognition program for the printing and graphic communications sector which includes objectives, policies, procedures, and governance structures; underlying psychometric principles; development, maintenance and administration costs; ownership, pricing and revenue considerations; partnership modalities and protocols.

A willingness on the part of the industry to use a national recognition program for the printing and graphic communications sector will be demonstrated through participation in the project working group and consultation and validation sessions. As well, success will be measured through the willingness of participants to provide honest feedback in order to create a national recognition program that truly reflects the needs of the sector. However, ultimately, the success of the national recognition program will be judged by the uptake, i.e. how many workers and employers are willing to use the national recognition program as a means of recognizing competency in the sector.