ODiCY
Observatory on Digital technologies in Career guidance for Youth

THE PONDER PROGRAM: CAREER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The *Ponder Program* supports schools to deliver scaffolded career education, aligned with global standards such as the Australian Blueprint for Career Development and the UK's Career Development Framework. The program allows students to explore their strengths, connect these to the workplace, explore the workplace, and then bring their knowledge together to make decisions about their future.

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- **Launch year**
  2021

- **How many schools are currently making use of it?**
  51 - 250

- **Other tags**
  Has been evaluated | Is informed with research | Not free of cost

- **Career development**
  Accessing information/guidance | Preparation & reflection

- **Age group**
  Lower-secondary (ages 12 to 15) | Upper-secondary (ages 16 to 18)

- **Countries**
  Australia | New Zealand | United Kingdom | United States

Resource overview

Website: The Ponder Program

Schools embed the *Ponder Program* within existing school programmes, such as homeroom or pastoral care sessions, using digital resources such as videos and online activities. The programme empowers teachers to spark career conversations with students and harnesses the power of the teacher as one of the key career influencers in a young person's life. Typically, the school's Career Leader will manage the program and distribute the digital resources to homeroom co-ordinators or subject teachers, who then deliver the units to their students, either online or in-class. The programme works when delivered to an individual year level or in a

vertical setting with multiple year levels taking part at once. Additional resources and printable posters keep the program front-of-mind and give students the opportunity to engage with the content in their preferred format. The programme uses familiar digital technologies to reduce friction for teachers and improve integration within existing school technology platforms.

Description of technology

Uptake is strongest when teachers feel confident in their ability to use the technology, so the *Ponder Program* uses technologies teachers are already familiar with to deliver the programme. These include online videos, a website, interactive webpages and forms, downloadable slide shows, and interactive PDFs. The programme is delivered online, which allows schools to access the resources at a time and place of their choosing, and removes the location barriers faced by many rural and remote schools. The choice of digital technology also reduces the costs of creating the programme, which allows us to keep costs as low as possible for schools.

How the resource makes career guidance more effective, efficient and/or equitable for students

The *Ponder Program* reduces workload and gives schools a ready-made career education programme that slots into existing structures, which is the first part of the puzzle, but it also fosters career conversations which OECD analysis shows are linked with better employment outcomes: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/career-conversations_15b83760-en. This is where the 'good stuff' happens. Students and teachers are engaging together in a familiar environment and sparking conversations about careers which would not normally have taken place. Teachers are supported with the resources and information they need to feel confident holding positive career conversations, and the programme makes the most of the influential role teachers already play in the lives of their students.

Career education and guidance within a school environment is often limited by the available resources, and many schools employ limited staff or no staff with training in offering career support, which is where *Ponder* can assist. Schools may not have the funding to employ specialist staff or may be unable to source them. *Ponder* can be delivered by non-career experts such as wellbeing staff, heads of year levels, or physical education staff at a very low cost to the school in an efficient manner – that way, the school's staff are not spending time creating educational resources, but instead can focus on fostering positive career conversations.

As the programme is digital and delivered online, schools do not need to source in-person career educators or professional development, which can be particularly problematic for

regional and remote schools. *Ponder* therefore provides an equitable and accessible solution for all schools, regardless of location or budget.

Ponder also 'slots in' with other career education programmes, and it supports the continuation of learning on a regular basis as the units are designed to be delivered in regular, short modules (standard use is between 10 and 20 minutes, once a week). This can enhance the impact of other interventions, including one-on-one career guidance, making them more efficient.

Challenges or potential barriers to use

The programme comes at a low annual cost, which a potential barrier. To combat this, reduced fee memberships are offered for schools, and no-fee memberships for schools and community groups which are unable to afford the programme but would benefit from the content. Schools need to be able to access the internet in order to access and download the program resources, and the videos and slide shows require access to AV equipment within the school.

The resource not free of cost to practitioners

Ponder is a social enterprise and charges a low fee to schools for the program which covers operational costs and the development of new resources.

Support for users

Some users require support to use the resource. Once schools go through the onboarding process they need little additional support. Occasionally, schools will use the success of the *Ponder Program* in their school to advocate for more career education resources, and when they receive these, they are supported to find new ways to use the program in their school.

All resources are delivered through familiar technologies and common educational platforms (i.e. Microsoft Powerpoint, Adobe PDF), and support is provided for educators who are not confident with these platforms. The resources are also offered in multiple formats, which allows the educators to choose the platform that works best for them.

Further advice for users

The *Ponder Program* works best when a school-wide approach is taken, but we find that it is often difficult for schools to start out with this type of approach. Instead, a group of early adopters share their successes, which encourages other teachers to begin using the

programme, which leads to an eventual school-wide approach. It generally takes schools around six months to move from initial adoption to a school-wide approach.

Additional details

Has the resource been...	Yes or No?	Description	Link
...informed by research?	Yes	*Ponder* has conducted its own internal research, including a literature review and design-based research pilot program. Existing best-practice documents to develop the Career Development Framework which underpins the Ponder Program were also used	https://ponder.education/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Career-Development-Framework.pdf
...funded by government?	No		
...recognized by peers?	Yes	*Ponder* has been identified as a commended product by the Career Development Association Australia	https://www.cdaa.org.au/CDAAWebsite/Web/CDAA-Commended/CDAA-Commended-Products.aspx?hkey=3b0eb200-cca4-45ef-8602-a6aab02e752e
...evaluated?	No		

This resource has been endorsed by Trinity Catholic College, Goulburn, NSW, Australia

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