

ALIA Professional Pathways Phase 2 Consultation Paper response from CAVAL

CAVAL was created to promote co-operation between Victorian academic libraries for the benefit of its membership. Since then, it has evolved into a relevant and key driver in the global library environment, ever-expanding and diversifying. While members remain the core focus, the quality solutions and services offered by CAVAL provide benefit to libraries and educational institutions throughout Australia and New Zealand.

CAVAL actively builds collaboration and engagement between member and non-member institutions, industry partners and thought leaders through its leading services, programs that forge professional networks, and initiatives that support growth and innovation. CAVAL facilitates and manages numerous committee and interest groups with a strategic focus on capability building within the Library and Information Sector. This includes the facilitation of the CAVAL Cross-Institutional Library Mentoring Program, the CAVAL Research and Information Group, the CAVAL Professional Development Interest Group, and the Customer Services and Collaboration Network. CAVAL also hosts and facilitates many events both face to face and online.

As an employer and learning developer within the sector, CAVAL appreciates the opportunity to respond to Phase 2 of the ALIA Professional Pathways Consultation.

The framework

CAVAL currently employs both staff who have Library qualifications and those who have qualifications from allied professions. There was a consensus that Phase 2 reduced the value of a full qualification as microcredentials in the minimal “core” areas defined in the paper, and the ability to obtain these, would likely replace the need for a full degree structure.

There were discussions as to who the framework was targeted towards as there seems to be an inability to satisfy the needs of either those who have completed an ALIA accredited degree or those who are entering the sector via alternative pathways.

CAVAL would recommend returning to the diagram put forward by the Health Libraries in Phase 1 of the consultation process as this was able to better demonstrate how the foundation elements related to domains as well as being user/community focussed.

Alternative pathways to professional recognition

CAVAL welcomed Phase 1 of the consultation as this was providing a pathway for Allied professions to be recognised within the Sector as key stakeholders and relevant contributors to the industry. However, the Phase 2 Consultation paper seems to have deviated from this focus and may not demonstrate clear value in completing further professional education and training in library-specific skill sets. CAVAL has several significant contributors to the industry that currently do not hold an ALIA accredited qualification. It is viewed that, with the proposed pathways, if they were to leave CAVAL they would not be able to stay within the industry given their lack of formal LIS qualifications. We would see this as a loss to the industry as they bring other qualifications including in the areas of Finance, Commerce,

Information Technology, Publishing, and Marketing and Communications.

Work with educators to strengthen accredited courses

Currently, CAVAL works with educators at ALIA accredited course providers to supply professional placement opportunities for their students. CAVAL is also often a direct employer of recent or soon-to-be graduates. CAVAL has found that during these placements, and during the hiring process, there is still significant skills that require to be developed. In particular within resource description and systems.

It was also noted that there is a culture of uncertainty around how to appropriately value skills and experience which already exist within the library profession. This would apply to both those with and without a library qualification. This would not necessarily be resolved by the proposed badging system as this may not explicitly address how to evaluate the application of past training and experience in the domain areas.

Microcredentialing can be a valid form of qualification and maintenance of someone's professional development; however, it would be recommended to work with other industry bodies to create a suite of microcredentials to reduce the number of competing instances available. This may be in the areas of Marketing and IT. There would also need to be provisions put in place to be able to accept professional development that has been conducted outside of an LIS education provider as this may be relevant to enhance the individual's ability to undertake their role. Courses such as the Australian Institute of Company Directors' course or Microsoft/Amazon certifications may be included in professional development recognition.

We are concerned that the Phase 2 consultation paper seems overly ambitious, and would like to recommend that ALIA works with partner providers (such as CAVAL and aligned industry groups) to be able to distribute the load of continuous professional development (PD) delivery for the sector.

Employer engagement

In recent years it has been identified by CAVAL and its members that there is a significant gap in skills that are required to be able to meet the needs of the organisation. This includes in the areas of Systems, Business Analysis, Project Management, and Finance. Libraries are required to become savvier with its workflows, finances, and systems as budgets are being significantly reduced and resources are not being replaced as staff leave, this leaves a large skills gap.

There are a number of examples of "on the job" training leading to credentialed professionals through a mixture of intensive courses and work experience training. Partnering with organisations such as CAVAL would be able to help provide these intensive courses ensuring industry relevant skills are being trained.

The below examples provide clear pathways to obtain qualifications that are supported by the industry and recruits new members to the profession in the process:

Example 1: In France, a qualified primary school teacher can apply for a course to become a specialist teacher to assist children who experience severe learning difficulties. It's an 'on-the-job' course funded by the sector: employees can access full wages while training, and have to take an end-of-year exam to validate the course.

Example 2: Within Victoria Police, to become a detective, a police member applies for a detective position. Once they are successful in obtaining the position, they perform the duties of a detective while attending Detective Training School where they undertake blocks of study until they have passed the required courses in the specific tenure period. At the end of the process, they obtain the position of Detective and graduate with an Advanced Diploma of Police Investigation.

Example 3: CPA Australia, have created pathways to allow people with non-accounting or any relevant degrees to become a CPA. Depending on the entry level of the applicant determines the path they travel to reach their goal.

ALIA have invested significant resources and funding into this consultation, and we appreciate the ability to respond to each phase of the project. We want to ensure the success of the ALIA Pathways Programme as many of our staff have come into the industry from an alternative pathway. We see a richness in their contributions and would like to recognise the diverse perspectives that they bring to the profession.