



Launch of the updated Gatsby Benchmarks for Good Career Guidance Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. What are the Gatsby Benchmarks?

The Gatsby Benchmarks are a world-class framework for secondary schools, colleges and independent training providers to design career guidance programmes for young people.

The eight Gatsby Benchmarks are:

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from careers and labour market information
3. Addressing the needs of each young person
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal guidance

The full framework can be found in chapter 4 of the *Good Career Guidance: The Next Ten Years* report, which can be downloaded here: www.gatsbybenchmarks.org.uk

Q2. Why have the benchmarks been updated?

Since the publication of the original benchmark framework in 2014, Gatsby has had the privilege of supporting the remarkable transformation of careers guidance in secondary schools and colleges. Evidence of impact continues to grow year-on-year and careers guidance is delivering enormous benefits for young people. There is a huge amount to celebrate and be proud of.

There have been significant changes in both education and the labour market and developments in technology over the last decade. We have also seen improvements and innovations in career guidance. The time was right to reflect on the framework and ensure the benchmarks were fit for the future so that secondary schools, colleges and ITPs can continue to provide world-class careers guidance for every young person.

Q3. How have the benchmarks changed?

After extensive consultation and research, we have only made updates that the evidence suggests will lead to improved outcomes for young people.

Schools, colleges, ITPs and wider stakeholders overwhelmingly told us that stability was important. Much is staying the same – all eight benchmarks have been retained – acknowledging the impact of the hard work and progress over the last few years.

But there are some important changes to be aware of in every benchmark, particularly in the summary statements and measurable criterion. We have also added expanded definitions of what constitutes a ‘meaningful’ encounter or experience.

Some changes **reassert** important elements of career guidance that have been cemented into practice over the last few years (for example, embedding the term Careers Leader explicitly into Benchmark 1). Some changes **clarify** areas that might have been misunderstood (for example, we have added and expanded definitions of ‘meaningful’ in Benchmark 5, 6 and 7), and finally some changes are **stretching**, making career guidance fit for the future (for example, we have extended Benchmark 4 – linking curriculum learning to careers – to cover all subjects, each year. It no longer only references STEM).

The updated wording can be found in chapter 4 of the *Good Career Guidance: The Next Ten Years* report and a document containing a track change version of the framework, comparing the original and updated wording of benchmarks, can be found in Appendix 9 (accessible online at www.gatsbybenchmarks.org.uk).

Q4. Should schools, colleges and ITPs start delivering the updated benchmarks straightaway? Are they part of statutory guidance, as the original benchmarks were?

The updates to the benchmarks build on those originally published in 2014. If you work towards the updated benchmarks, you are still compliant with the statutory guidance that was published in 2018.

We are pleased to say that the Government have announced that updated statutory guidance will be published to include the updated benchmarks in Spring 2025 to enable institutions to embed the new framework into their careers programmes for implementation from September 2025.

The updated benchmarks now capture the best practice across the country alongside up-to-date evidence on world class career guidance. We encourage headteachers and principals, governors and Careers Leaders in schools, colleges and ITPs to read the report, take time to reflect on everything we have learnt, and think strategically about how to embed the updated benchmarks into their practice

Q5. What is being done to support schools, colleges and ITPs with implementing the updated benchmarks?

Gatsby will continue to work with a range of organisations, including the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC), Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), Career Development Institute (CDI) and National Governance Association (NGA), to ensure

the sector is supported to understand the updated benchmarks. Further resources and information will be provided in the coming months.

Gatsby also continues to invest in national careers guidance programmes and research. For example, [Talking Futures](#), run by the CEC, which – through free training and resources – helps Careers Leaders work strategically to improve parental engagement. To find out more about Gatsby’s continuing work supporting career guidance go to www.gatsby.org.uk/goodcareerguidance

Q6. Will Gatsby be sharing what ‘best practice’ looks like for the benchmark updates? Has there been a pilot of the updated benchmarks?

The updated benchmarks continue to represent world-class careers guidance provision. They are based on the most up-to-date evidence and impactful practice from across the country. The *Good Career Guidance: The Next Ten Years* report contains many case studies of effective practice that we observed (see chapter 4).

With much being retained in the framework, schools and colleges are already working towards the benchmarks so it hasn’t been necessary to do a pilot of the updated framework. Gatsby is working closely with a number of early adopter schools, colleges and ITPs who will begin to implement all or some of the updated benchmarks during the 2024/25 academic year. We’ll share their implementation journey, the solutions they create to any obstacles they face and how they develop their careers programme using the updated Benchmarks.

To keep up to date with our latest information please sign up for our mailing list and for the latest examples of practice please visit www.gatsbybenchmarks.org.uk

Q7. Why has a benchmark for parents not been added?

Parents and carers play a hugely influential role in helping their children make informed decisions about their future. Parent and carer engagement is one of five key themes that emerged from the evidence which has informed the updates to the benchmarks.

Updates now embed the importance of parent and carer engagement across several benchmarks and require institutions to share information with them, provide support to parents and carers and for this to be incorporated into strategic planning. It is impossible to achieve all 8 benchmarks, and provide world class career guidance, without engaging parents and carers.

The Gatsby Foundation and the CEC have developed [Talking Futures](#) which includes a suite of training and resources that support careers leaders to enhance parent and carer engagement in careers in their institutions. There is also an accompanying national campaign.

Q8. Should the updated benchmarks be used in primary schools?

Whilst primary schools can play an important role in raising aspirations and broadening the horizons of their children, the updated benchmarks continue to be designed to support the career guidance of young people in secondary schools, colleges and ITPs.

Q9. How will institutions' progress against the benchmarks be measured?

The benchmarks define what constitutes world class careers provision. They are more than a checklist and continue to be an improvement tool for institutions to use to ensure each and every young person benefits from the very best career guidance. Schools, colleges and ITPs will continue to use the national Compass tool, managed by the CEC, to measure their progress against the benchmarks. The CEC will keep schools and colleges up to date with any changes to the tool.

Q10. Does a careers adviser need to be level 6 qualified to be considered 'appropriately trained'?

The Career Development Institute is the professional body for career development professionals. They set standards for professional practice and determine appropriateness of qualification levels. Implementing Benchmark 8 depends on having a trained and well-distributed workforce of careers advisers available to work in schools, colleges and ITPs. Trained careers advisers, whether a member of internal staff or externally commissioned, are skilled in guidance techniques and have up-to-date knowledge of the full range of future pathways and labour market opportunities. This gives them the tools to provide personal guidance meetings that meet the needs of young people and focus on their interests alone.

Q11. Where can I find more information about the updated benchmarks?

The updated benchmark framework, rationale for changes and examples of impressive practice are available in the *Good Career Guidance: The Next Ten Years* report on the [Gatsby Benchmarks](https://www.gatsbybenchmarks.org.uk) website (www.gatsbybenchmarks.org.uk).

Email careerguidance@gatsby.org.uk to sign up for further updates.