

Implementing the revised Gatsby Benchmarks

Implications for Educational Leaders

The Gatsby Benchmarks provide a robust, evidence-based, guide on how schools, colleges and other educational organisations can deliver career guidance programmes. They were developed in 2014 by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation.

The Gatsby Benchmarks have been endorsed by Government since 2017 and currently form part of the [statutory guidance](#). All educational providers should take the Benchmarks into account as they design and deliver their career guidance provision.

The eight Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance are:



1. A stable careers programme



2. Learning from career 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

Why the Gatsby Benchmarks have been revised

After a decade the Gatsby Charitable Foundation undertook a review of the Benchmarks to ensure that they were still fit for purpose. This included two years of research and consultation, drawing on international evidence and listening to young people and the educators who have been putting the Benchmarks into practice.

The research found that the Benchmarks remained as a sound, evidenced-based summary of how to organise an excellent careers programme. The structure and key principles that have informed the Benchmarks since 2014 have stayed in place. But there were several areas where the Benchmarks were strengthened, these include:

- linking the careers programmes to the institution's vision and overall strategic plan, assigning distinct responsibilities to leaders and governors, and paying attention to staff development
- ensuring that young people are supported to make effective use of career and labour market information
- using data to help personalise the support that is provided to all young people, especially the most vulnerable
- clarifying the definition of 'meaningful' encounters with employers and learning provides to stress that activities should be two-way and encourage learning and reflection
- emphasising the importance of working with parents and carers as key stakeholders in young people's career decision making

Gatsby have summarised these changes and the underpinning research on their [website](#).

The changes to the Gatsby Benchmarks have been endorsed by the Government and are included in the latest version of the statutory guidance. All educational institutions should keep them in mind as they prepare and deliver their careers programmes.

Monitoring the Gatsby Benchmarks using the Compass evaluation

One important way that educational institutions have worked with the Gatsby Benchmarks is by using The Careers & Enterprise Company [Compass evaluation](#) to conduct a self-evaluation of their programme. This is an online tool that works by asking you a series of questions related to your programme and comparing this to the framework set out in the Gatsby Benchmarks.

The Compass evaluation has allowed careers educators, and senior leaders, to review and reflect on their careers programme and gain a clear indication of whether it is aligned with the principles and recommendations of the Gatsby Benchmarks. It is this tool that has allowed people to report that their institution for example 'has met six out of the eight Benchmarks' and more importantly to see what they need to do to meet all of the eight.

Introducing the new version of the Compass evaluation

The Careers & Enterprise Company has undertaken a detailed mapping of the new Benchmarks and used this to construct a new version of the Compass evaluation.

As well as addressing the changes in the new Benchmarks, the Compass evaluation has been redesigned to give users a more detailed level of insight into their programmes. This should mean that the process of reviewing your programme and reflecting on where to focus should be much easier.

The new version of the Compass evaluation will be available from November 2025 and resource and support can be accessed via our [Resource Directory](#).

How could the number of Benchmarks you meet change?

As the Compass evaluation has been redesigned it may mean that the number of Benchmarks you meet changes. So, a programme that was successfully achieving eight Benchmarks in the past, could now achieve fewer.

For example, if your careers programme is not currently underpinned by learning outcomes or linked to the whole-school or college development plan, the new requirement may mean you no longer meet Benchmark 1. Additionally for example, the new requirement to build careers into **'the school or college's ongoing staff development programme for teachers and all staff who support pupils'** may require you to develop a new approach to meet Benchmark 4.

For many educational institutions, including those that are delivering excellent careers programmes, this may require new developmental work. There is no expectation that this can be accomplished immediately. Use the new version of the Compass evaluation to give you insights into where developments are needed and build a plan to help you get there.

It is important to remember that the results you receive (how many Benchmarks you meet) is a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. It is good to aim for eight Benchmarks, but more important to commit to a process of continuous improvement. Undertaking a [Careers Impact internal leadership review](#) annually supports this continuous improvement of your careers programme, and ensures it is aligned to your school or college improvement plans.

Use the Compass evaluation to help you understand how to improve, rather than to compare with your previous results or with the performance of other institutions.

Explaining why your score may have changed

The fact that the revised Benchmarks and the new version of the Compass evaluation may have changed the number of Benchmarks that you meet, is nothing to worry about. You should use it to drive institutional improvements and give yourself time to address the changes and develop your programme.

If you have previously shared the number of Benchmarks your institution meets whether with parents and carers, employers, learners, or through public channels such as your website or social media, it is important to update stakeholders on any changes. This communication should be positive, highlighting the strengthened framework and the improved evidence now available to support your careers programme.

The Careers & Enterprise Company has produced a stakeholder briefing sheet to help you with these communications. This can be downloaded via our [Resource Directory](#).

Understanding the national picture

The Careers & Enterprise Company produces an annual national summary of how educational institutions are doing in relation to the Gatsby Benchmarks. Because of the revisions to the Benchmarks, it will not be possible to directly compare the previous data with the current data.

However, The Careers & Enterprise Company will be undertaking further analysis in spring 2025/26 to allow for meaningful comparisons over time. This analysis will be published in the summer term of 2026 and will clarify both the current picture and how it compares to the past.

As with all of The Careers & Enterprise Company's reports, data will only be used in aggregate to ensure that all individual data remains anonymised.

Making the most of the new Benchmarks

The new Gatsby Benchmarks provide educational institutions with the most robust and evidence-based framework so far. If you have been using the existing Benchmarks, you should find that it will only require a modest evolution of your programme to meet the new requirements. But this is likely to take time and effort.

We would recommend focusing on the improvement of your programme first, by using the Benchmarks to guide you, rather than on the results that you achieve through the Compass evaluation.

The following process is offered as a way to manage this development of your programme:

