

## The Quality in Careers Standard

### A briefing for Careers Hub leads and Enterprise Coordinators

#### What is the Quality in Careers Standard?

The Quality in Careers Standard is the single national quality award for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) in secondary and special schools, sixth form colleges and further education providers in England.

**DfE statutory guidance (May 2025) strongly recommends all schools achieve the Quality in Careers Standard to demonstrate the quality of their careers provision.**

The Standard is:

- Externally assessed by trained, independent, occupationally competent assessors
- Awarded for a three-year cycle, encouraging continuous improvement
- Aligned to the Gatsby Benchmarks, Ofsted's inspection framework and DfE statutory guidance
- Achieved through any of the licensed awarding bodies – listed at [qualityincareers.org.uk](https://qualityincareers.org.uk)

#### What the evidence shows

The Careers & Enterprise Company conducts an annual analysis matching Compass data for schools holding the Quality in Careers Standard against the national cohort. The December 2025 analysis – the fourth consecutive year this has been carried out – produced consistent findings.

**6.6**

Gatsby Benchmarks achieved on average  
*QIC Award Holders (578 schools)*

**6.0**

Gatsby Benchmarks achieved on average  
*National average (4,863 schools)*

Quality in Careers award holders outperformed the national average on every single Gatsby Benchmark in 2024/25:

Benchmark	QIC Award Holders	National Average
1. A stable careers programme	<b>84%</b>	69%
2. Learning from labour market information	<b>94%</b>	85%
3. Addressing the needs of each pupil	<b>72%</b>	62%
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers	<b>91%</b>	82%

5. Encounters with employers and employees	<b>93%</b>	87%
6. Experiences of workplaces	<b>76%</b>	74%
7. Encounters with further and higher education	<b>70%</b>	60%
8. Personal guidance	<b>83%</b>	77%
<b>AVERAGE BENCHMARKS ACHIEVED</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>6.0</b>

Source: Careers & Enterprise Company Compass analysis, December 2025. Produced for the Quality in Careers Consortium. Based on 578 Quality in Careers state school and college award holders matched against 4,863 state-funded schools completing Compass nationally.

**This independent analysis – produced by the CEC, not by any awarding body – is now in its fourth consecutive year and consistently shows the same pattern: schools that commit to the Quality in Careers Standard achieve higher Gatsby Benchmark scores than the national average.**

### How the Standard relates to the Careers Impact System

A common question is how the Quality in Careers Standard relates to the Careers Impact System. The two are complimentary but have different outcomes.

### Quality in Careers Standard

An externally assessed quality framework, incorporating the Gatsby Benchmarks that validates and recognises what a school has developed. It builds upon the diagnostic work done through self-assessment, internal leadership reviews and peer-to-peer reviews. It celebrates best practice and highlights areas for development as part of an ongoing cycle of improvement. It is the only way to externally accredit careers provision, led by independent assessors.

**Schools do not need to have completed all eight Gatsby Benchmarks or completed work on the maturity model before starting the Quality in Careers Standard. CEC evidence shows that schools working towards the Standard progressively improve their benchmark scores as they do so – the two frameworks reinforce each other.**

### What you can say to schools

You are not expected to recommend individual awarding bodies as impartiality between licensed bodies is important. What you can usefully tell schools:

- DfE statutory guidance strongly recommends schools achieve the Quality in Careers Standard
- Schools can achieve the Standard through any licensed awarding body – listed at [qualityincareers.org.uk](http://qualityincareers.org.uk)

- The Standard is not a reward or end result for completing the benchmarks – schools can begin at any stage of development
  - CEC’s own analysis shows Quality in Careers holders consistently outperform the national average on Gatsby Benchmarks
  - Achieving the Standard provides external accreditation that in turn can support preparation for Ofsted inspection
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### **About Investor in Careers**

Investor in Careers is a Licensed Awarding Body for the Quality in Careers Standard, working nationally with secondary schools, colleges and MATs. We structure the process around the CODE framework – Commitment, Organisation, Delivery and Evaluation – and provide a bespoke e-portfolio for evidence upload, progress tracking and leadership reporting.

We support schools throughout the process – not just at assessment. MAT level reporting and group discounts are available.

- Standard package – £1,425 + VAT
  - Enhanced package – £1,825 + VAT (includes targeted consultancy and pre-assessment evidence review)
  - Group discounts available for MATs
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### **Resources for your schools**

Attached to this note is a one-page overview of the Quality in Careers Standard and the Investor in Careers approach, suitable for sharing with Careers Leaders via Padlet, network emails or your hub resources page. It can be shared without endorsing any individual awarding body.

We are also happy to:

- Offer a 20-minute briefing call for your team
  - Provide a short presentation slot at your next Careers Leader network event
  - Answer any questions about how the Standard works in practice
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### **Contact**

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