



Department
for Business
Innovation & Skills



Department
for Education

Careers guidance and inspiration

Guidance for general further education
colleges and sixth form colleges

March 2015

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Summary

1. Since September 2013, all further education (FE) colleges and sixth form colleges in England have been subject to a requirement to secure access to independent careers guidance. This forms part of FE college and sixth form college funding agreements. The requirement was introduced alongside an extension of the age range of the existing careers duty on schools to years 8-13.
2. This document offers guidance on which colleges may wish to draw when interpreting the requirement and deciding on the most appropriate forms of independent and impartial careers guidance and other kinds of careers support and inspiration for students. The DfE has also published [statutory guidance](#) and [departmental advice](#) for schools on careers guidance and inspiration, which can be used by colleges to review support for 14-16 year old students.

Expiry or review date

3. This advice will be reviewed on an annual basis, but it will only be revised if it is no longer considered fit for purpose.

Who is this advice for?

4. This guidance is for all FE colleges and sixth form colleges in England. The requirement applies to:
 - All students in colleges up to and including the age of 18; and
 - 19- to 25-year-olds with a current Learning Difficulty Assessment in place under section 139a of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 or with an Education Health and Care Plan in place under section 37 of the Children and Families Act 2014.¹

Key points

5. High quality, independent careers guidance is crucial in helping students leave college more fully rounded and ready for the world of work. The aim of the requirement is to ensure that all young people in FE have access to external perspectives beyond the college.
6. Providing more direct experience of the world of work, a clear view of the labour market and a good understanding of progression routes will inspire young people and help them understand where their choices will take them in the future.

¹ Section 45 of the Education Act 1997 remains in force and should continue to apply to students of all ages, alongside the new requirement. This requires all college students to be provided with guidance materials and a wide range of up-to-date reference materials relating to careers education and career opportunities.

7. Independent careers guidance secured under the requirement should:
- Inspire and inform young people about the full range of education, training and employment opportunities available to students
 - Be provided in an impartial manner, and
 - Promote the best interests of the student to whom it is given
8. The government is not prescribing how each college fulfils the requirement. There is a wide range of support available, and drawing on connections with a network of employers should be a central aspect of the college's overall careers strategy. An illustration of the range of organisations and programmes that can help colleges to deliver inspirational advice and guidance is shown at the end of this document. Organisations named here and throughout this guidance are provided as examples of good practice and are not specifically endorsed by government.

Related duties and the role of governors

9. Inspiring, informing and supporting young people at this age is especially important now that young people have to stay in education or training for longer. Students who left year 11 in summer 2014 are the first cohort required to continue until at least their 18th birthday².
10. All educational establishments have a duty to notify local authorities, or the service provider of the local authority, whenever a 16 or 17 year old leaves an education or training programme before completion³. Colleges will also need to work with local authorities to ensure that students in their first year of post-compulsory education have received a suitable offer, under the [September Guarantee](#), of a place in education or training for the next academic year.
11. Colleges are encouraged to connect to the wider business community to identify speakers from business, student mentors and relevant work experience placements. Governors are well placed to facilitate such engagement.

Reviewing, evaluating and improving

12. Well informed decisions about education, training and work options are critical to young people realising their potential. Opening the eyes of young people to the wealth of opportunities available to them can raise their ambitions and encourage them to overcome barriers to success, and to pursue the qualifications and skill development necessary to realise their highest potential.
13. The government recognises that many FE institutions already have successful student support services – often holding the [matrix standard](#). This is the recognised

² [Statutory Guidance](#) on the participation of young people is available on the gov.uk website

³ Section 13 of the Education and Skills Act 2008

national quality standard for information, advice and guidance (IAG) services. Colleges should review existing support and take steps to ensure this meets their students' needs. Feedback from students and parents can help to inform future provision. Feedback from employers can also be useful to evaluate the different activities they provide.

14. [Destination measures](#) are published by the Department for Education and show the percentage of a college's former students who continued their education or training (including through an apprenticeship), went into employment, and those who were not in education, employment or training.
15. Colleges can use destination measures data to assess their success in supporting students to take up education, employment or training which offers good long term prospects. These data can also be used to compare colleges' performance with those in other areas.
16. Destination measures data are drawn from a number of sources, including the databases managed by local authorities. Colleges can help local authorities to ensure that these databases are as complete as possible by sharing relevant information about their students so that the local authority can follow up their destinations on completing key stage 5⁴.

Inspiration for students

17. To engage successfully with information about education, training and career choices and apply it to their ambitions, students need to be inspired and motivated to think about a broad and ambitious range of future career possibilities. More contact with employers can help to broaden their horizons and challenge stereotypical thinking or pre-conceived ideas about different careers.
18. Evidence shows that there is a mismatch between the careers that young people want to pursue and the opportunities available. Employers can help students to understand the implications of pursuing different career paths, highlight possibilities they may never have considered or help to consolidate existing thinking about future careers.
19. Colleges should provide students with access to a network of employers from a range of sectors and professions. This can be highly motivating and help students to understand the skills and attributes needed for employment.

Activities that could achieve this include:

- Mentoring and coaching
- Speakers from the world of work
- Employer career talks and help with CV writing and career management skills

⁴ Section 72 of the 2008 Education and Skills Act makes provision for information to be shared.

- Workplace visits and high quality work experience
- Work ‘taster’ events such as games and competitions
- Careers fairs and career networking events
- Access to creative online resources and labour market intelligence
- Access to open days at higher education (HE) institutions

20. Facilitating access to inspirational role models can inspire students about the careers to which they aspire, instil confidence and help them to overcome barriers to success. This can be particularly beneficial for those students who may get less support from family and social networks.

21. Colleges should ensure that students understand that self-employment or setting up their own business is one of the options open to them. Colleges should consider the importance of developing an enterprising culture to help students obtain the skills needed to succeed in self-employment.

Inspiring the future

‘Inspiring the Future’, launched in July 2012 by the Education and Employers Taskforce, matches schools and colleges with inspiring employers who can give career insight talks. Further information is available at the [Inspiring the Future website](#).

Future First

‘Future First’ helps schools and colleges harness the experiences and skills of their former students through alumni communities. Further information is available at the [Future First website](#).

Careers and enterprise company

22. In 2014 the Secretary of State for Education announced the creation of a new careers and enterprise company, to transform careers and enterprise provision for young people and inspire them about the opportunities offered by the world of work.

23. The core purpose of the company will be to broker relationships between employers on the one hand, and schools and colleges on the other, in order to ensure that young people aged 12-18 get the inspiration and guidance they need for success in working life. It will hold a distinctive voice and position as the leading, umbrella body with an

overview of activity on careers, inspiration, enterprise and employability work – driving better quality and coverage.

24. The company will:

- Provide advice to schools and colleges, helping them choose effective careers organisations to partner with, through a local network of advisors;
- Assist in breaking down perceived barriers between schools and colleges and employers – private, public and third sector -and increasing the level of employer input in careers provision;
- Map the extent of engagement between schools and employers across the country and stimulate more activity in areas where evidence suggests it is needed;
- Develop a system which motivates young people to take part in activities to build their employability, through the development of the Enterprise Passport recommended by Lord Young. The passport is a digital record of all extra-curricular and enterprise-related activities that students take part in;
- Provide feedback to Government on how well young people are being prepared for work;
- Administer a £5 million investment fund to support innovation and stimulate good practice;
- Support a network of advisors to broker strong local links - the company will assist schools to choose the best careers and enterprise organisations to partner with.

25. It will work closely with the National Careers Service, which will continue to support adults and young people and help the company to bring employers, schools and colleges together.

Helping students access information

26. Many young people are highly motivated by work. Facilitating access to labour market intelligence can build on that interest, inspiring young people to get excited about a range of jobs. Employers can help students to understand the structure of jobs in different sectors and where there is demand for skills, including local opportunities. Students may also need help in accessing information about the routes into different careers.

27. Colleges should ensure that all their students have access to and are taking advantage of this information, exploring options from the full range of possibilities including:

- Vocational and academic routes
- Traineeships and apprenticeships, including higher apprenticeships
- Further, higher and postgraduate study

- Work experience
- Work and study abroad
- Volunteering
- Supported internships and sustainable employment.

28. From October 2015, the Government plans to make information on the full range of post-16 education and training opportunities available via a national database which portals can present to young people in a way that helps them make choices effectively. Students will be able to use portals, whether national or local in scope, to find out about the post-16 options available to them.

Ensuring adequate support for young people with special educational needs or disabilities

29. Colleges should have high aspirations for all young people, including those with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities. They should raise the career aspirations of their students with SEN or disabilities, broadening their employment horizons and supporting them in preparing for the next phase of education or training and beyond into adult life. Young people with SEN or disabilities should receive independent and impartial advice about all of the education, training and employment opportunities that are on offer, including specialist provision.

30. Colleges should make use of the 'local offer' published by local authorities, which will set out details of the SEN provision and support available to young people with SEN and disabilities, to help them prepare for adulthood, including getting a job. Colleges should work closely with local authorities, who have an important role to play, particularly through the provision of SEN support services and Statements of Special Educational Needs / Learning Difficulty Assessments and Education, Health and Care Plans. Where a young person has an Education, Health and Care Plan, all annual reviews must include a focus on preparing for adulthood, including employment, independent living and participation in society. [Statutory guidance](#) on the new SEN duties is provided in the 0-25 Code of Practice, to which colleges must have regard.

Support for choices and progression

31. Some students will need little support to make good choices based on their aspirations and the information they can access. Others will need more help in thinking about their current position, their strengths, the opportunities and risks associated with different career paths and what it will take to get there. Colleges should ensure that the individual needs of all students are considered.

32. Face-to-face discussions with a range of people can give students the confidence and motivation to explore different career ideas. Colleges should secure access to face to face advice and guidance where it is the most suitable support for young people to make successful transitions. While most young people can benefit from face-to-face guidance, it is likely to be particularly useful for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, those who are at risk of disengaging and those who have special educational needs or disabilities. A range of external sources can provide this type of support including:

- Mentors and coaches can provide sustained support, instilling confidence to help young people to overcome barriers
- Role models and inspiring individuals from the careers to which young people aspire
- HE advisers can provide specific advice about HE options
- The National Careers Service website provides job market information and job profiles
- College alumni can provide students with a role model they can relate to – helping to change their perceptions of what they are capable of achieving
- Independent careers advisers can help students to locate ambitious careers options by assessing their abilities, interests and achievements.

33. Training in preparing CVs, job hunting and interview techniques can also help young people prepare for the next step. Colleges should provide specific help for those who wish to progress to HE, for example in completing UCAS applications.

National Apprenticeship Service

To ensure that students get a real insight into apprenticeships and other vocational routes, colleges may wish to signpost the [National Apprenticeship Service](#) to students and parents, or invite employers and other local education and training providers to input to their overall careers programme. There is also a range of [resources](#) available on the National Apprenticeship Service website to assist those offering advice on apprenticeship routes.

The Skills Show

[The Skills Show](#), part of Find a Future, is the nation's largest skills and careers event. The show provides hands-on experiences that inspire young people to explore careers and motivate them to find out more about the world of work. The Skills Show is free to attend. In addition [The Skills Show Experience](#) offers a nationwide programme of over 220 skills and careers events delivered through collaborative partnerships, reaching an additional 200,000 young people across the nation and designed to respond to local labour market needs.

The National Careers Service

34. The National Careers Service offers information and professional advice on education, training and work to adults and young people aged 13 years and over. Students can access support via a [website, helpline and web chat service](#) (or by calling 0800 100 900). Those aged 19 or over can book a face to face appointment with a National Careers Service adviser in their local area. Additionally, the [Lifelong Learning Account](#) is now open to 13 year olds and upwards. Young people can use this free, secure on-line space to store the outputs of the National Careers Service career tools such as the CV building, course search, skills health check as well as their apprenticeships, volunteering and other work experience all in one easily accessible place.
35. The National Careers Service is currently co-located in over 125 colleges and some colleges provide the National Careers Service face-to-face service as sub-contractors. Colleges can choose to commission additional support from contractors engaged in delivering the National Careers Service.
36. The government is keen to see more extensive partnership working between colleges and the National Careers Service, including extending this to working with schools, Jobcentres and employers to provide a more integrated local careers guidance infrastructure underpinned by informed labour market intelligence. The Association of Colleges has published a [practical guide](#) to closer working between the National Careers Service and colleges ('Increasing National Careers Service co-location with colleges and the role of Colleges in providing a service to schools - a feasibility study, October 2012').
37. The National Careers Service has expanded its offer to schools and colleges. The National Careers Service brokers relationships with and between schools, colleges, local communities and employers, working with Local Enterprise Partnerships and

local Jobcentre Plus where appropriate, to help young people benefit from inspiring first-hand experience of the world of work and opportunities available in the local and national labour market. Colleges can contact the National Careers Service through the National Contact Centre, which will provide information and support on engaging with employers. Local area based contractors will also be able to work with colleges on local arrangements. Contact details for these will be available through the National Contact Centre and on the website, along with other resources.

Case Studies

The impact of mentoring on employer engagement through the Career Academy programme - Cirencester College

Sam Taylor, Career Academy Finance student 2010-2012, Ernst and Young trainee accountant

“Having been a Career Academies UK student myself, I know how beneficial it was for me to have my own mentor. Therefore, once I was able to I wanted to be able to return the favour and become a mentor myself. Mentoring has been very rewarding. At the same time it has allowed me to develop personal and communication skill and managerial qualities which are so vital for my career.”

Cirencester College was the first Career Academy centre to open outside London. With no major city nearby it has focussed on developing strong relationships with local and regional businesses to complement the national support it receives from Career Academies UK.

The college runs four Career Academy programmes specialising in Finance, Business, IT and Sport. The two-year programmes are based on four pillars - internships, workplace visits, masterclasses and mentoring - all delivered by employer volunteers. Each programme has evolved to reflect the requirements of the relevant industry sector as well as students' aspirations and interests.

Mentors provide students not only with one to one support, but also with vital links to the local employer network. Meetings with mentors take place both at the college and in the office or building where mentors work, so students are able to absorb the culture and behaviour of the workplace.

Mentors are recruited from the sector relevant to the students' Career Academy programme and the college currently has over 50 actively volunteering. This gives students direct insight into the roles and careers available in that sector and an understanding of the skills necessary to get into, and be successful in, their chosen field. Mentors are encouraged to guide students on their career decisions and on their job and university applications, providing a mix of information and inspiration for students. Mentors also provide a link to colleagues and clients in their networks.

The college's Career Academy students have achieved a high level of success. A number of alumni students have been recruited on to school leaver programmes run by Ernst and Young, KPMG and Deloitte. Nine have returned to serve as mentors to current

academy students. Employer volunteers acting as mentors were vital in the college winning the Santander Career Academy of the Year award in 2014.

Further information: [Laura Daniel, Academies and Work Experience Coordinator](#)

Offering paid work experience in students' chosen industry through a summer internship programme – Burnley College

Ian Wilson, Managing Director, Fort Vale Engineering

“The Inspiring Careers programme is a genuine opportunity for students to come into the workplace and learn more about the industry, which inspires and motivates them to achieve highly on their qualifications and then look to pursue a career in engineering. We have been more than impressed with the four students we employed”..

Working with a number of well-respected organisations in the North West, Burnley College developed a proposal for a programme of work experience for its students to take part in over the summer holidays, matching students to a chosen industry and employer.

The proposal was put to the college's Skills and Employability Advisory Board, which is chaired by the Chief Executive Officer of a local company and made up of a number of local business leaders. The board approved the programme and was also instrumental in suggesting some of its key features:

- An allowance of £500 for completing the placement
- Flexible in length, up to 6 weeks; and
- Ensuring that students see a project through from start to finish.

These features provide an added sense of responsibility and realism so that students can get a real taste of what it is like to work in that industry. Projects worked on include how to improve customer service, ways to increase business productivity and how organisations develop teamwork.

The college initially planned to pilot the approach in summer 2013 with 10 students spread across 6 employers. However, after receiving more than 40 applications, 24 students were placed with 11 employers.

Those students who did not secure a place were still able to benefit from the experience. They received professional support on writing application forms and interview training in addition to experiencing a real interview and receiving feedback.

The response from the employers has been incredibly positive and Burnley College plans to place 50 students with up to 25 employers in summer 2014.

Further information: [Hugh Bramwell, Principal](#)

Working with employers to offer professional skills and insight into different industries - East Norfolk Sixth Form College

Sophie Sims, Student

“The interview skills training session that I went to was really helpful. I didn't have much knowledge on how to apply for jobs and what it might entail before, but the session helped me to understand the applying process and gives me confidence for any future application.” .

East Norfolk Sixth Form College was aware of the importance of making a good first impression, and understood that providing students with the skills to impress in job applications and during interviews would help them make their first steps into employment.

The college works closely with a number of local employers to provide this. Representatives from Gardline Group, a marine sciences and technology company have visited the college to run mock interviews for students and offer feedback and tips. Gardline also offers work experience placements to students from the college, for which students are encouraged to submit CVs, before being invited to interview. A placement is offered to three students and all applicants receive detailed feedback during the interview.

The college also works with OPITO, an oil and gas skills organisation, to run the “Platform of Opportunity Week”. This is a series of events, workshops and visits offered by a range of offshore organisations, that provide students with an introduction to a range of industries, including oil and engineering, as well interactive sessions and mock interviews.

These links with businesses provide essential skills both for general job applications and interviews as well as providing contacts and guidance on pathways for entering specialised industries.

Further information: [Daphne King, Principal](#)

Encouraging students to expand their career aspirations using inspiring employers - Guildford College of Further and Higher Education

Protection Officer, Metropolitan Police

“I find that people very often set their limitations too low. If we can provide confidence and tips... then hopefully it will help these young people to pursue their chosen paths” .

A number of Guildford College’s students had a narrow view of the career directions open to them after completing their studies. Some had fixed ideas of what they wanted to do if they had a job, for example, but even these students needed some support to ensure they were aware of how to succeed in that chosen career or to ensure they were on the right path to reach their full potential.

Having already arranged a number of successful events through the Speakers for Schools organisation, the college turned to its sister programme, Inspiring the Future, to further boost its careers offer to students.

The college prepared a day of events with a number of inspirational employers, consisting of a careers insight speed-dating event and group mock interviews. The employers came from a variety of industries that the students would not normally have had contact with such as a Protection Officer for the Metropolitan Police and an HR and Business Manager from the House of Commons.

During the speed-dating exercise, the different employers would move between groups of students. Students could ask questions about the employer’s job including how they got started in their career, the qualifications needed and any tips they would offer for success.

The mock interviews were delivered in a similar format, with employers moving between groups, in which one student would be interviewed while the other group members made notes and scored the interviewee. The employer would then discuss with the wider group and provide feedback to the student being interviewed. Moving the employers between the groups meant that all students received guidance on conducting interviews from a range of employers and most experienced being interviewed.

The events showed that using employers from certain industries could help to break-down stereotypes. The Protection Officer, one of only a handful of women carrying out this role, and a design analyst from a vehicle and engineering consultancy, provided strong female role-models to female students who may never have considered those careers.

Further information: [Alexa Hipwood, Faculty Resource Officer](#)

Further sources of information

Key Government Documents

- [Careers inspiration vision statement](#) The government's statement on careers inspiration policy
- [Careers guidance action plan](#) Provides the government's response to recommendations from Ofsted's thematic review and National Careers Council's report.

Other Departmental advice and guidance

- [Statutory guidance for schools on careers inspiration](#)
- [Departmental advice for schools on careers inspiration](#)
- [Statutory guidance on duties relating to the participation of young people in education, employment or training](#)
- [Non-statutory advice to help schools, colleges and other training providers deliver work experience as a part of 16-to-19 study programmes and traineeships for 16- to 23-year-olds](#)

Representative Bodies

- [157 Group](#) A membership organisation that represents 27 large and regionally influential further education colleges in England.
- [Association of Colleges \(AoC\)](#) Exists to represent and promote the interests of colleges.
- [Sixth Form Colleges' Association \(SFCA\)](#) Represents the interests of the sixth form colleges sector.

Organisations and intermediaries helping to bring employers into the classroom

- [Business in the Community](#) Provides a framework for developing long term relationships between schools and businesses through its Business Class programme.
- [Career Academies UK](#) Helps raise young people's aspirations and bridge the gap between education and work by giving them access to real experience of the world of work.

- [Education and Employers Task Force](#) Supports effective partnerships between schools, colleges and employers to inspire young people
- [Future First](#) Helps schools and colleges harness the experiences and skills of their former students through alumni communities.
- [Ideas Foundation](#) Has two key projects: 'I Am Creative' aims to teach 13-19 year olds about the creative industries and gives them an opportunity to have a go at answering a live creative brief from a global company; 'Incubate' brings specialist industries employers into the classroom to work intensively with young people on projects from across the Digital and Media communications sector.
- [Inspiring the Future](#) A free service across England with volunteers from all sectors and professions going into state secondary schools and colleges to talk about their jobs and sectors.
- [Young Enterprise](#) A business and enterprise education charity, helping young people to learn about business and the world of work in the classroom, under the guidance of a network of volunteers from a range of companies.

Careers guidance and inspiration resources

- [5th Matrix](#) A careers and networking platform which encourages young people to investigate and share careers ideas.
- [Career Development Institute](#) The Institute has developed a set of professional standards for careers advisers, a register of advisers holding postgraduate qualifications and guidelines on how advisers can develop their own skills and gain higher qualifications.
- [Growing Ambitions](#) A bank of multimedia resources that can be downloaded and used in lessons to help students make informed choices about their future.
- [Icould](#) Careers information website
- [Job Zoo](#) Provides CV and careers resources
- [Matrix](#) All providers of the National Careers Service are accredited to the matrix Standard. An online register of organisations accredited to the matrix Standard is available on the website. If an external provider is not accredited, the college can use the matrix assessment criteria as a guide to the quality of the careers services offered.
- [National Careers Service](#) Provides information, advice and guidance to help young people and adults make decisions on learning, training and work opportunities. The service offers confidential and impartial advice, supported by qualified careers advisers. Support available to young people via a website, helpline and webchat on 0800 100 900.

- [Plotr](#) An online service which allows young people to explore careers and brings together opportunities in one place.
- [Skills to Succeed Academy](#) A free, highly interactive, on-line training programme designed specifically to help young people choose the right career for them, and build the key employability skills they need to find and keep a job.
- [The Skills Show](#) Responsible for the UK's largest skills and careers event at the NEC Birmingham.
- [Prospects](#) A graduate careers website supporting students to find graduate jobs, postgraduate courses, work experience and careers advice.

Apprenticeship resources

- [National Apprenticeship Service](#) Supports, funds and co-ordinates the delivery of Apprenticeships throughout England.
- [Your Guide to Apprenticeships](#) Provides essential information and sources of further advice and support on apprenticeships.

Helping young people to build life skills

- [National Citizen Service](#) Provides an opportunity open to all 16 & 17 year olds in England and Northern Ireland, to help build skills for work and life.
- [Prince's Trust](#) Changes young lives by helping to develop key skills, confidence and motivation, enabling young people to move into work, education or training.

Higher education resources

- [Bestcourse4me](#) Provides information for pupils on wage returns to particular degrees and universities.
- [IntoUniversity](#) Operates local learning centres offering an innovative programme that supports young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to attain either a university place or another chosen aspiration.
- [Unistats](#) The official website for comparing UK higher education course data.
- [Which? University](#) Supports choice in HE.

Mentoring resources

- [Brightside](#) A charity that helps young people access the education and career pathways they might not have believed were available to them.

- [Horseshmouth](#) A social network for informal mentoring.

STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) resources

- [Science and Engineering Ambassadors](#) Works with schools, colleges and STEM employers, to enable young people of all backgrounds and abilities to meet inspiring role models, understand real world applications of STEM subjects and experience hands-on STEM activities that motivate, inspire and bring learning and career opportunities to life.
- [The Big Bang Fair](#) – The largest celebration of science, technology, engineering and maths for young people in the UK.
- [Tomorrow's Engineers](#) Provides information and resources about careers available in engineering and run a schools programme to help inspire the next generation of engineers.

Work experience resources

UK Commission for Employment and Skills: '[Not just making tea: reinventing work experience](#)' - A guide that explains just how important it is for businesses to inspire young people, busts some myths that have been putting employers off and gives advice on how to go about offering work experience.



Department
for Education

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Reference: DFE-00116-2015



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