



ASSOCIATION
OF COLLEGES

Association of Colleges careers survey report – March 2020

June 2020

The Association of Colleges (AoC) represents nearly 93% of the 244 colleges in England incorporated under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

Introduction

This AoC careers survey was sent out to colleges at the beginning of March with a closing date just prior to the closure of all colleges due to the Covid19 Pandemic. Thank you to those colleges that took the time to respond at what was and continues to be a challenging time for those in education. As such the responses reflect careers education, information, advice and guidance prior to the full impact of the pandemic on the sector and students. We took the decision not to extend the survey as the responses received before and after 20 March would have reflected completely different circumstances.

Careers guidance will continue to play a vital role in colleges as reopening begins. With the possibility of increases in unemployment due to the pandemic, particularly for young people, careers will be even more in the spotlight to ensure that students and prospective students are able to make informed decisions.

Responses

47 colleges or 20% of all colleges responded to the survey. Responses were received from all regions of the country.

Careers Strategy and Education Inspection framework.

Colleges responded that the 2017 Careers strategy (83%) and the new Education Inspection Framework (75%) had added greater emphasis to an already well-established focus on careers.

Senior leadership and Governance

100% of colleges have a Careers Lead. There was variation across colleges, but for the majority this is a member of the senior leadership team (SLT) and or Head of Student services (64%). For most colleges careers is an item on the SLT agenda at least once a term (51%) and in some cases at least every half term (36%). 96% of colleges have a published careers policy.

52% of colleges have a lead Governor for careers. Careers is on the Governors agenda at least once a year in 48% of colleges, once a term in 28% of colleges and every half term in 11% of colleges.

Operational leadership and curriculum engagement

61% of colleges have operational careers leads covering all college sites. Careers is an agenda item in 85% of curriculum meetings. In 66% of colleges all curriculum departments embed careers, in another 28% of colleges over 50% of departments embed careers. 96% of colleges identify the guidance needs of all young people with SEND and put in place personalised support based on the learner's needs.

Careers advisors and scope

The average number of careers advisors per college is 3.6 within a range of 1 to 20. This needs to be seen within the context of the variety of colleges which responded. Of these careers advisors slightly more have level 6 qualifications (133) than Level 4 (100). These advisors work with both current and prospective 16 to 18-year old students. Over 80% of colleges reported that careers advisors also work with 19+ and HE students and apprentices.

External services

Few colleges, 6, pay for services from external providers for careers guidance or employer engagement. Only 3 colleges engage external providers to source work experience or industry placements.

Gatsby Benchmarks

There was strong support for the value of the Gatsby Benchmarks. 96% of colleges feel that the Gatsby Benchmarks add value and 93% feel that they have an impact on their college's careers offer. When asked which, if any of the benchmarks present a challenge to colleges, nearly 50% pointed to benchmark 8 which requires 1:1 careers careers guidance for every student. Most felt that this is impractical in a college setting without additional funding. Some colleges also felt that the benchmarks are quite schools focused such as the benchmark about all students accessing other providers when many students are on programmes that lead straight to work.

Careers Enterprise Company (CEC) engagement

81% of colleges are in an enterprise advisor network and 60% are in a careers hub. 86% of those not in a careers hub would be interested in joining one. 47% have taken part in a CEC funded cpd programme.

93% of college have completed the compass tool and 87% felt it was helpful.

58% of colleges are aware of the CEC sponsored AoC Beacon Award for Careers.

National Careers Service

In 23% of colleges the National Careers Service (NCS) is co-located. 93% of colleges signpost to NCS.

Quality in Careers Standard

28% of colleges have full Quality in Careers Standard accreditation or are making good progress towards it. 65% would like to find out more about the Quality in Careers Standard. 91% think that the Quality in Careers Consortium call for a £1000 'careers premium' is a good idea.

Baker Clause

57% of colleges reported that some or more schools allow colleges access to all students for careers purposes since the introduction of the Baker Clause. Only 9% reported that all schools allow access to all students. 9 colleges reported that the Baker Clause has had no or little impact.

Only two colleges indicated that they have no problems with local schools' compliance with the Baker Clause. Challenges faced by colleges wishing to access school students are indicated in the table below.

If the local schools in your area are not compliant with the Baker Clause, what challenges have arisen for your college when recruiting prospective students as a result? (Please tick all that apply)	Number of responses	Percent
Preventing pupils from attending college open days	10	26%
Refusing to display college information within careers units or other outlets	11	28%
Not distributing prospectuses to pupils	13	33%
Non participation in taster days	18	46%
Not telling pupils about technical education/ apprenticeships	16	41%
Declining offers for college liaison officers to speak to all pupils	23	59%
Only allowing college liaison officers to speak to certain pupils	23	59%
No challenges	2	5%
Other	9	23%

16 colleges think that the best way of tackling this non-compliance is through legislation, audit or inspection. However, a number feel that establishing relationships or networks and ensuring that schools are well-informed about the whole range of post 16 options would help.

What would make college-based careers guidance more integrated and impactful?

Funding and resource (more careers advisors) were key responses to this question. Many colleges also indicated they would like access to more training for careers and curriculum staff and a national tracking system for careers for both schools and colleges.

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