EAST SUSSEX COLLEGE

Careers Education & Guidance Policy

Policy Area:	**Student Services**
Policy Lead:	**Managing Director Business Development & Skills**
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1. Introduction

1.1. East Sussex College provides impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance to help students manage their progression through learning and work.

1.2. This policy has regard to the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance *Careers guidance and access for education and training providers* (updated June 2026). It also draws on the updated Gatsby Benchmarks (2024), the Career Development Institute (CDI) Career Development Framework and Chapter 8 of the SEND Code of Practice (2015).

1.3. Where the college's own plans set a higher standard than the statutory guidance, this policy applies the higher standard.

2. Policy statement

2.1. East Sussex College will give every student a planned careers programme and access to independent personal careers guidance when they make decisions about their next step. Both will be impartial and in the best interests of the student.

2.2. The college's careers programme gives all students, including those with an EHCP or High Needs funding, opportunities to develop, demonstrate and evidence their employability skills and readiness for their next steps in study or employment (Gatsby Benchmark 1).

2.3. Students are supported to understand the progression and career opportunities linked to their course. Teachers use their subject teaching to share destination information and introduce students to people who have progressed into careers linked to their sector, including college alumni (Gatsby Benchmarks 3 and 4).

2.4. The college's local, national and international links provide students with meaningful encounters with employers and employees and experiences of workplaces. Teachers use current labour market information (LMI) in their subject teaching (Gatsby Benchmarks 2, 4, 5 and 6).

2.5. Through the East Sussex Careers Hub, Enterprise Advisers linked to the Sussex and Brighton Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priority sectors provide links to employer networks, LMI and employer engagement opportunities for students (Gatsby Benchmarks 2, 4, 5 and 6). Section 5 of Appendix 2 lists the Sussex partners the college works with.

2.6. Students considering higher-level study, including higher technical qualifications and higher and degree apprenticeships, are supported to make informed decisions about their pathways. Widening participation partnerships with the University of East Anglia, the University of Brighton and the University of Sussex give students fair access to their chosen programme (Gatsby Benchmark 7).

2.7. All students, including those with an EHCP or High Needs funding, have access to personal guidance from a careers adviser qualified to Level 6 when they make progression choices (Gatsby Benchmark 8).

2.8. Partnerships with schools, East Sussex County Council and the Youth Employability Service support transition and induction arrangements, including the Right Choice period, for students at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET).

2.9. Partnerships with schools, the local authority and careers partners support the transition of young people into the college, including students with an EHCP or High Needs funding.

2.10. The college identifies students at risk of leaving early, using Priority First data and attendance, and refers them for support to reduce the number of young people who become NEET.

2.11. Each student records their intended destination in Navigate at the start of the year, and all intended destinations are confirmed by December. The college uses this information to target careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) at students with

unclear progression plans.

2.12. The most effective way to deliver careers education is to embed it in teaching, supported by tutorial and enrichment. Centrally delivered careers activities support curriculum delivery rather than provide a stand-alone careers programme.

2.13. The careers programme supports the college's Strategic Plan 2025-28. In particular, it contributes to the commitments to reduce local NEET numbers, increase progression to Level 4 and above, improve life and work outcomes for people with SEND, and reduce local skills gaps.

2.14. The careers programme also supports the college's priority on attendance and engagement. Students who can see where their course leads are more likely to attend and complete it.

3. Scope

3.1. This policy applies to all students of East Sussex College, including apprentices, adult students, students on higher education programmes, and students with an EHCP or High Needs funding.

3.2. The statutory duties apply to students aged 16 to 18 and to students aged 19 to 25 with an EHCP. The college applies one careers system to all students, adjusted to their programme. Appendix 2 sets out the minimum for each group.

3.3. This policy is for governors, the principal and senior leaders, the Careers Leader and careers advisers, curriculum, tutorial and student services staff, and employers and partners who work with students.

3.4. Students, parents and carers can use it to understand what the college offers.

4. Definitions/glossary

4.1. **Careers adviser**: a person qualified to at least Level 6 in career guidance and development.

4.2. **Careers guidance**: all activity delivered under the 8 Gatsby Benchmarks.

4.3. **CDI**: the Career Development Institute, the professional body for career development.

4.4. **CEIAG**: careers education, information, advice and guidance.

4.5. **EHCP**: education, health and care plan.

4.6. **Gatsby Benchmarks**: the 8 benchmarks of good career guidance, developed by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation and updated in 2024.

4.7. **LMI**: labour market information.

4.8. **LSIP**: Local Skills Improvement Plan.

4.9. **Matrix Standard**: the Department for Education's quality standard for organisations that deliver information, advice and guidance.

4.10. **Must**: the college is legally or contractually required to do something.

4.11. **NEET**: not in education, employment or training.

4.12. **Priority First**: the college's approach to identifying students with additional or multiple barriers and prioritising the support they need to participate, progress and achieve.

4.13. **Right Choice**: the first six weeks of the autumn term, during which students who find their course is not right for them can discuss a transfer to a different course with their tutor, subject to availability of places.

4.14. **Should**: the college will do it unless there is good reason not to.

4.15. **Student**: any student, apprentice or other learner at the college.

5. Roles & responsibilities

5.1. The Governing Board and senior leaders are responsible for making sure the college meets its statutory duties on careers guidance.

5.2. The Careers Leader leads the careers programme with the backing of the senior leadership team. This role is distinct from that of the careers advisers who provide personal guidance to students.

5.3. Careers advisers provide impartial personal careers guidance.

5.4. Enterprise Advisers are business volunteers who help the college develop its careers strategy and employer engagement.

5.5. Teachers, Study Programme tutors and progress tutors deliver careers learning and monitor student participation.

5.6. Students are supported to take ownership of their progression and career planning.

5.7. Employers, partners and volunteers must complete safer recruitment checks and safeguarding assurance before they work with students.

5.8. Appendix 1 sets out the detailed responsibilities for each role.

6. Compliance & monitoring

6.1. The college will seek feedback on the careers programme from students, parents and carers, teaching staff, careers advisers and employers on at least 2 occasions each academic year.

6.2. The college self-reports against the Gatsby Benchmarks each term using Compass+, which replaced Compass on 1 September 2026. It completes the Careers Impact internal leadership review each year.

6.3. An annual gap analysis names the actions and owners needed to meet all 8 benchmarks. Section 4 of Appendix 2 sets out current progress and the impact indicators.

6.4. The college holds the matrix Standard accreditation for information, advice and guidance services.

6.5. The Careers Leader reports termly to the SLT performance board. The Curriculum, Skills & Quality Committee notes the contents of this policy and receives an annual careers quality and impact report, with a mid-year update.

6.6. Ofsted inspects careers guidance under the renewed education inspection framework, introduced in November 2025. Ofsted must comment on careers guidance for students aged under 19 and students aged 19 to 25 with an EHCP.

7. Related policies/references

7.1. This policy should not be read in isolation: helping students to plan and manage their progression through learning and work is at the core of East Sussex College's activities, and staff should therefore read and familiarise themselves with the following policies and procedures:

- Annual Accountability Statement 2026-27
- Curriculum & Skills Master Plan 2024-28
- Inclusion (Priority First) Plan 2026-27
- Provider Access Policy Statement
- Safeguarding & Prevent Policy
- SEND Master Plan 2025-28
- Strategic Plan 2025-28

- Student Experience Operational Framework 2026-30, including the work experience procedure
- Student Experience Plan 2026-30
- Student Privacy Notice

External guidance:

- CDI - Career Development Framework
- DfE - Careers guidance and access for education and training providers (statutory guidance, updated June 2026)
- DfE and Department of Health - SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (2015)
- Gatsby Charitable Foundation - Good Career Guidance: The Next 10 Years (2024)
- Ofsted - Further education and skills inspection toolkit (2025)

8. Legal & statutory framework

8.1. This policy gives effect to the following legislation. The college must:

- Provide independent careers guidance to students aged 16 to 18, and to students aged 19 to 25 with an EHCP, that is impartial, covers the full range of education and training options including apprenticeships and technical routes, and is in the best interests of the student (Education Act 1997, section 42A, applied to colleges through their funding agreement
- Give all students access to careers guidance materials and a wide range of up-to-date reference materials (Education Act 1997, section 45)
- Tell East Sussex County Council as soon as possible when a 16 or 17 year old leaves a programme before completing it (Education and Skills Act 2008, section 13)
- Give the local authority the student information it needs to support participation in education and training (Education and Skills Act 2008, section 72)
- Hold the matrix Standard as a condition of Adult Skills Fund delivery

8.2. The provider access legislation (Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022) applies to schools, not colleges. See Section 7 of Appendix 2.

8.3. The college must have regard to the following statutory guidance:

- DfE - Careers guidance and access for education and training providers (statutory guidance, updated June 2026)
- DfE and Department of Health - SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (2015)

Appendix 1: Careers structure & responsibilities at East Sussex College

1. Governing Board & senior leaders

1.1. The Governing Board and senior leaders are responsible for making sure the college meets its statutory duties on:

- Impartial careers guidance for students at key times when career decisions are made, including students with an EHCP or high needs funding
- The central tracking of students' participation in careers activity and their destinations
- Giving all students information on the full range of education and training options, including apprenticeships and technical routes
- Linking the careers programme to the college's improvement priorities and the achievement of the related KPIs

1.2. The governing board should name a governor who takes a strategic interest in careers and employer engagement.

1.3. Senior leaders should give the Careers Leader protected time and a budget, and invest in personal guidance from qualified careers advisers.

2. Careers Leader

2.1. The college will appoint an appropriately trained Careers Leader who, with the backing of the senior leadership team, will make sure students receive their careers entitlement and independent personal careers guidance. This role is distinct from that of the careers advisers who provide personal guidance to students.

2.2. The Careers Leader will:

- Lead the development of a stable careers programme and publish it on the college website each September
- Support curriculum teams to develop and monitor curriculum-led careers education
- Work with the SENCO and inclusion team so that students with SEND, and their parents and carers, take part in activities that support progression to a higher level of study, employment or supported work
- Develop and deliver a co-curricular careers programme which adds value to curriculum-led provision
- Evaluate careers activity against the agreed KPIs and the Gatsby Benchmarks, using Compass+ each term, including student, employer, and parent and carer participation, and the impact on students' learning and progression
- Collate and evaluate feedback on the careers programme and use it to inform the development of the strategy and its activities
- Engage parents and carers throughout the programme
- Review the Provider Access Policy Statement annually

3. Careers advisers

3.1. Careers advisers (personal guidance specialists qualified to Level 6) will:

- Provide impartial personal careers guidance
- Be registered members of the CDI and work to the CDI Code of Ethics
- Contribute to EHCP annual reviews and staff training

3.2. The college may employ careers advisers or commission the service from external organisations.

4. Enterprise Advisers

4.1. Enterprise Advisers are senior business volunteers, matched to the college through the East Sussex Careers Hub, who spend around 8 hours a month working with the college. An Enterprise Adviser uses their business experience and professional networks to help develop and implement a careers strategy that puts opportunities with local employers at the heart of a student's education.

4.2. Enterprise advisers support the college by:

- Helping to develop the college's strategic careers plan
- Supporting enterprise and employer engagement
- Providing an employer perspective and access to their local business networks
- Helping the college focus on the activities that are most effective in motivating students, supporting independent choice and supporting positive outcomes
- Helping the college develop networks which provide supported employment opportunities for students

5. Teachers, Study Programme tutors and progress tutors

5.1. Teachers, Study Programme tutors and progress tutors will:

- Deliver programmes of study that enable students to develop and evidence their employability skills and progress to their next level of education or into employment
- Promote student engagement in employability activities that give direct contact with employers
- Link their subject to the range of career paths open to students, and name these links in schemes of learning
- Promote English and maths, including through the careers programme, as essential to each student's future career opportunities
- Hold a careers conversation in each termly progress review and support students to keep their intended destination up to date in Navigate
- Monitor student participation in careers activities, and make sure each student receives the entitlement set out in paragraph 2.3 of Appendix 2

6. Students

6.1. Students will be supported to:

- Take active ownership of their progression and career planning
- Develop and demonstrate their employability skills by taking part in the curriculum and centrally delivered careers activities available to them

7. Employers, partners & volunteers

7.1. Employers, partners and volunteers must complete safer recruitment checks and safeguarding assurance before they work with students.

Appendix 2: Procedures & implementation

1. Adults, apprentices & higher education students

1.1. The minimum entitlement for apprentices, adult students and students with high needs is set out in section A3 of the Student Experience Operational Framework. The minimum for each group is:

Student group	Minimum entitlement
Apprentices	A careers thread in every progress review; guidance at recruitment, gateway and exit; higher and degree apprenticeship routes explored at gateway
Adult students	Information, advice and guidance at entry, on course and at exit; an assessment of barriers such as childcare, transport and funding; qualified guidance within 10 working days of a request; delivered to the matrix Standard
Adults returning to work	Routes through Connect to Work, Sector-based Work Academy Programmes and Skills Bootcamps
Students with high needs	A careers plan built into the EHCP annual review cycle; guidance from a SEND-trained adviser; supported internships with job coaching
Higher education students	Employability and progression support through personal academic tutoring

2. Careers programme

2.1. The careers programme is delivered in 3 ways:

- Through tutorial: taught careers education in weekly group tutorial, including the Careers Planning and Progression Pathways and Getting Ready for Work Experience units, delivered by tutors, careers professionals and external partners such as employers
- Through enrichment: students take part in activities with a strong connection to the curriculum, such as employer masterclasses, enterprise challenges and mentoring, within the wider life and future skills category of the enrichment offer
- Through the curriculum: delivered by teachers in their subjects, including English and maths. Every scheme of learning names its careers links. The programme is sequenced using the CDI Career Development Framework so that it builds on students' prior knowledge

2.2. The college should publish its careers programme on its website each September. The page should give the name and contact details of the Careers Leader, a summary of the programme, how students, parents, carers, staff and employers can access it, how the college measures its impact and the date of the next review.

2.3. Every student aged 16 to 18, and every student aged 19 to 25 with an EHCP, is entitled to the following minimum:

Entitlement	Minimum	Gatsby Benchmark
Careers programme	A planned programme for their course and level, published and explained at induction	1
Labour market information	Current, impartial LMI for their sector and the Sussex economy, with the same information available to their parents and carers	2
Intended destination	Recorded in Navigate at the start of the year and confirmed by December	3

Entitlement	Minimum	Gatsby Benchmark
Curriculum links	Teaching, including English and maths, that makes the link to careers explicit	4
Encounters with employers	At least 2 meaningful encounters with employers or employees each year, at least one through their curriculum area	5
Experience of a workplace	At least one meaningful experience of a workplace by the end of their programme, as defined in section A4 of the Student Experience Operational Framework. T Level students complete their industry placement	6
Next-step routes	Meaningful encounters with higher education, higher technical qualifications, apprenticeships at all levels and other providers, beyond the college's own offer	7
Personal guidance	A careers conversation in each termly progress review, Level 6 guidance at key decision points, and a one-to-one guidance interview before leaving	8
Transition support	Help with applications and interviews, and follow-up after they leave	3

2.4. All students, including those with an EHCP or high needs funding, also have access to:

- My Student Life resources, with regular updates from local businesses, colleges and universities (Gatsby Benchmarks 2, 3, 5 and 7)
- On-site careers fairs, and visits to local university and apprenticeship fairs, to understand the options and pathways open to them (Gatsby Benchmarks 2, 5 and 7)
- Work placements arranged through a written agreement and recorded in the individualised learner record (Gatsby Benchmark 6)
- Employability workshops on the expectations and behaviours of the workplace (Gatsby Benchmarks 2, 3 and 5)
- Employer visits, talks and workshops that share current sector skills trends and forecasts, including how AI is changing work in their sector (Gatsby Benchmarks 2, 4 and 5)

2.5. An encounter or experience counts towards the entitlement only if it has a clear purpose shared with the student and the employer, learning outcomes suited to the student, two-way interaction, and time to prepare beforehand and reflect afterwards. An employer must be directly involved in any activity recorded as an employer encounter. Activities delivered only by college staff are recorded as work-related activity.

2.6. Virtual activity may be used alongside in-person activity, but not instead of it.

2.7. The college should engage parents and carers throughout the programme. Parents and carers receive the same LMI as students and are invited to progression events. From academic year 2026-27 the college will survey them using the Your Child's Future questionnaire in Compass+.

2.8. Careers forms part of the annual staff development programme. Subject and support staff receive an annual sector briefing on progression routes, vacancies and pay for their curriculum area.

3. Destinations, transition & NEET prevention

3.1. The college works with schools, East Sussex County Council and the East Sussex Careers Hub on Year 11 transition and the September Guarantee. Youth Employability Service advisers are co-located at Eastbourne, Lewes and Station Plaza.

3.2. Students allocated a college place under the Youth Guarantee are placed in the targeted tier from day one. They receive a transition risk assessment before or at enrolment, a named adult in week one and a first progress review within the first half term.

3.3. When a 16 or 17 year old leaves early, the college offers an exit guidance interview and notifies the local authority, as required by section 13 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

3.4. Through FE Sussex, the college is leading work on a coordinated 14 to 19 transition and NEET-prevention model with partner colleges, the county council, schools and Jobcentre Plus, as set out in its Annual Accountability Statement 2026-27.

3.5. The college collects the actual destination of every leaver and uses sustained destination data to evaluate the careers programme. It uses alumni to support the careers programme.

3.6. The college shares student information with the local authority under section 72 of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The Student Privacy Notice explains the right to object to sharing information beyond name, address and date of birth.

4. Impact indicators

4.1. In summer 2026 the college fully met 3 of the 8 benchmarks, with high partial achievement on the other 5.

4.2. The college measures the impact of the careers programme using the following indicators, drawn from the integrated scorecard in the Student Experience Operational Framework. Targets will be confirmed once baselines are set in autumn 2026.

Indicator	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Gatsby Benchmarks fully achieved (Compass+)	6 of 8	8 of 8	8 of 8 sustained
Students with a recorded guidance interview	90%	95%	100%
Meaningful employer encounter every year	85%	95%	100%
Workplace experience completed by end of programme	80%	90%	95%+
Intended destinations recorded by December	95%	100%	100%
Sustained positive destinations, all leavers	+2 percentage points	+4 percentage points	+6 percentage points
Destination gap, disadvantaged and SEND students compared with all	Measured	Halved	Closed or nearly closed
Adult progression to further learning or better work	+3 percentage points	+6 percentage points	+10 percentage points
College leaver NEET rate compared with East Sussex average	Below average	Gap widening	Lowest in county

5. Partners

5.1. The Careers Leader reviews this list each September and may update it without a full review of the policy.

Partner	What the partnership provides	Gatsby Benchmark
East Sussex Careers Hub (East Sussex County Council and the Careers & Enterprise Company)	Network of 42 secondary schools, colleges and special schools; Compass+; careers leader training; peer review	1, 3
Enterprise Adviser Network	A senior business volunteer working with the Careers Leader on the strategic careers plan	1, 5
Industry Champions, Cornerstone Employers and Open Doors	Employer talks, mock interviews, careers fairs and small-group workplace visits	5, 6
Careers East Sussex	County careers website, local LMI and destination data, and Year 11 online applications	2, 3
Youth Employability Service (delivered by CXK for the county council until September 2028)	Support for 15 to 18 year olds who are NEET or at risk; September Guarantee tracking	3, 8
Sussex Chamber of Commerce and the Sussex and Brighton LSIP 2026 to 2029	Employer skills intelligence for the LSIP priority sectors	2, 4
Get Sussex Working Plan 2025 to 2035 and the Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority	Employment support, Youth Guarantee planning and devolved skills priorities	2, 3
Connect to Work, DWP and Jobcentre Plus	Supported employment, LMI and, from 1 October 2026, the jobs and careers service that replaces the National Careers Service	2, 8
University of East Anglia, University of Brighton, University of Sussex and the Sussex Learning Network	Higher education encounters, widening participation and progression to the University Centre	7
FE Sussex and the Sussex Council of Training Providers	Shared progression mapping, a coordinated NEET response and apprenticeship provider encounters	3, 7
NHS Sussex, Newhaven Enterprise Zone, Charleston and Employer Exchange partners	Placements, internships and live briefs in priority sectors	5, 6

6. Personal guidance

6.1. Personal guidance includes pre-course, Right Choice and progression guidance delivered by careers advisers who are qualified to Level 6 in career guidance and development, are registered members of the Career Development Institute (CDI) and work to the CDI Code of Ethics.

6.2. The college uses a tiered guidance model:

- Universal: progress tutors and student services staff are trained in CEIAG to at least Level 2, and every termly one-to-one progress review includes a careers conversation
- Decision points: Level 6 advisers deliver personal guidance at enrolment, at the Right Choice point and at progression, and on referral

- Targeted and specialist tiers: students in these tiers of Priority First, including those allocated a place under the Youth Guarantee, receive Level 6 guidance as standard

6.3. Every final-year student should have a one-to-one guidance interview by February, with access to a Level 6 adviser when required.

6.4. Where guidance is delivered by college staff, it must be impartial and must be supplemented by external sources, such as employers, the National Careers Service and higher education and apprenticeship providers.

6.5. Advice given and decisions agreed are recorded on the student's record and are available to the student. Careers records from a student's school are added where the school shares them.

6.6. Advisers work within an observation and supervision cycle. In October 2026 the college had 3 Level 6 qualified advisers, with a further 3 working towards the qualification through an apprenticeship.

6.7. The college publishes information on how to access personal guidance on its website and in My Student Life.

7. Provider access & impartiality

7.1. East Sussex College gives a range of education and training providers the opportunity to access students, to inform them about approved technical education qualifications, apprenticeships and higher education.

7.2. Careers guidance must be impartial, in line with the statutory duty. It must not show bias towards any route, academic or technical, or towards the college's own provision.

7.3. Students are told about all routes to higher skills, including apprenticeships, T Levels, V Levels, higher technical qualifications, A levels and degrees.

7.4. The provider access legislation (Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022) requires schools to provide 6 encounters with providers of technical education and apprenticeships. The duty does not apply to colleges. The college offers provider access as good practice. Where students on 14 to 16 provision remain on a school's roll, the commissioning school holds the duty and the college supports it.

7.5. The arrangements for provider access are set out in the college's Provider Access Policy Statement, available on the college website. The Careers Leader reviews it annually.

8. Students with SEND & other priority groups

8.1. Careers guidance for students with SEND, including those with an EHCP or high needs funding, is person-centred, based on high aspirations and follows Chapter 8 of the SEND Code of Practice. This includes working with students' families to help them understand what progression and career options are possible with the right support.

8.2. This includes the full range of relevant education, training and employment options, such as apprenticeships, supported internships (for students with an EHCP), supported employment, job coaching, Access to Work, self-employment and routes into higher education.

8.3. Students with an EHCP or high needs funding receive impartial guidance from careers advisers qualified to Level 6, who work with the SENCO and inclusion team and complete SEND-specific training as part of their professional development. Guidance is linked to the EHCP annual review, which must include preparing-for-adulthood outcomes.

8.4. The college uses vocational profiles to identify the strengths, interests and support needs of students with SEND. The Careers Leader, SENCO and inclusion team agree a transition plan for each student with an EHCP before their final year.

8.5. Other students who face barriers receive additional support through Priority First. These include care-experienced students and care leavers, young carers, students known to youth justice, students without Level 2 English or maths, students previously NEET, disadvantaged students, students with significant mental health needs, neurodivergent students, and asylum seekers and refugees.

8.6. For care-experienced students, the Careers Leader works with the college's designated lead for care-experienced students, the virtual school and the student's personal adviser.

8.7. The careers programme should challenge stereotypes about what different students can achieve and show students role models from a range of backgrounds.

8.8. The college reports careers participation and destinations by Priority First group. Its target is for 75% of Priority First students to progress to a positive destination by July 2027.