

Future Skills Questionnaire:

The development of a tool
to measure young people's
career-related learning and skills

Publication information

This paper is published by The Careers & Enterprise Company.
It should be cited as follows:

Tanner, E. and I. Finlay (2021). Future Skills Questionnaire: The development of a tool to measure young people's career-related learning and skills. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company.

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to the careers leaders, students, sector experts and researchers who contributed their time and expertise to the development of the Future Skills Questionnaire. They include the following:

- Careers Leaders from 30 schools and colleges who either took part in the consultation, pilot interviews or facilitated student completion of the pilot questionnaires.
- 3,500 students from who completed the pilot questionnaire and shared their feedback.
- Sector experts who took part in the consultation from the following organisations: Gatsby Foundation, Department for Education, Career Development Institute, Skills Builder Partnership, Edge Foundation, Education Endowment Foundation, University of Derby, Talentino, CIPD, AET academy trust and The Careers & Enterprise Company.
- National Centre for Social Research for advising on question design.
- Insightful Research for carrying out the cognitive testing.

Contents

About this report	I
Introduction	1
1. Consultation	5
2. Question design	8
3. Pilot	11
4. Post-pilot versions of the Future Skills Questionnaire	26
3. Next Steps	34

About this report

The Careers & Enterprise Company has created the Future Skills Questionnaire for measuring student progress in the knowledge and skills needed for making successful transitions after secondary education and to set them up for a positive career. This report describes the process of developing the tool, which involved consultation with career professionals and sector experts, a large-scale pilot, interviews with careers leaders and cognitive testing. The latest version of the questionnaire is presented, with tailored questions for students at points of transition: starting secondary school, choosing GCSE subjects, finishing Key Stage 4, and leaving school or college at 18/19 years.



“

This has made me put a lot of thought into my future. I never really thought about it, but now I am considering what jobs I might do, what careers I might have and so on. No one is too young to think about their career.

Year 7 student

“

An effective careers programme is tailored to the audience. [With the FSQ we can] amend the careers programme based on the students' previous experiences and aspirations. [I] want to use it to identify the gaps and to celebrate the positives.

Careers Leader

1 | Introduction

Our vision for data-driven practice

The Gatsby Benchmarks have been a game-changer for schools and colleges in setting out clearly what constitutes good career guidance.¹ With over 85% of state-funded schools and colleges now tracking their progress towards the benchmarks using the Compass tool, it is clear that careers programmes are becoming an integral part of the education system and the preparation of young people for their lives after school and college.² Careers leaders, who drive this agenda, have a framework of good practice, and a means for measuring progress and identifying gaps.

What we need now is an equivalent framework for tracking how effectively careers programmes are equipping young people with the knowledge and skills they need for taking the next step after school and college and for positive careers throughout their lives. Clarity on the learning outcomes of career programmes help those who design, deliver and participate in career activities 'plan with intent'.

Insight on student progress will enable careers leaders to tailor activities to individual need, evaluate programme effectiveness and embed a cycle of continuous improvement.

Time and resources are precious commodities in education. For investment in careers support to be sustained in schools and colleges, and backed by government, evidence of how it supports young people is needed. While we have growing data on the career programmes delivered and can chart the education and employment destinations of students, we lack data on how the two are linked. Student data on career-related

knowledge and skills will help career professionals understand better how careers activities can best support young people, and what difference this makes to their choices and next steps.

Learning outcomes from careers education

The Gatsby Benchmarks, and the Compass tool that tracks progress towards achieving them, support student learning by emphasising that encounters with employers and education providers should be 'meaningful', activities should be tailored to individual needs, and career programmes should be data-informed and evaluated, drawing on feedback from a range of stakeholders. However, the Gatsby Benchmarks are not an outcomes framework, in that they do not specify the knowledge and skills that students are expected to develop through participation in the careers programme. The Careers & Enterprise Company supports careers leaders to draw on the learning outcomes frameworks that sector bodies have created, including the [Universal Skills Builder Framework](#) and the [Career Development Institute \(CDI\) framework](#). These frameworks set out the knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to a successful career.

1. Gatsby Charitable Foundation (2014). Good Career Guidance. London: Gatsby Charitable Foundation.

2. The Careers & Enterprise Company (2020). Careers Education in England's schools and colleges 2020. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company.



Skills Builder

PARTNERSHIP



The receiving, retaining and processing of information or ideas



The oral transmission of information or ideas



The ability to find a solution to a situation or challenge



The use of imagination and the generation of new ideas



The ability to use tactics and strategies to overcome setbacks and achieve goals



The ability to set clear tangible goals and devise a robust route to achieving them



Supporting, encouraging and developing others to achieve a shared goal



Working cooperatively with others towards achieving a shared goal



Grow throughout life

Grow throughout life by learning and reflecting on yourself, your background, and your strengths.



Explore possibilities

Explore the full range of possibilities open to you and learn about recruitment processes and the culture of different workplaces.



Manage career

Manage your career actively, make the most of opportunities and learn from setbacks.



Create opportunities

Create opportunities by being proactive and building positive relationships with others.



Balance life and work

Balance your life as a worker and/or entrepreneur with your wellbeing, other interests and your involvement with your family and community.



See the big picture

See the big picture by paying attention to how the economy, politics and society connect with your own life and career.



A tool for measuring learning outcomes

There are different ways to measure how well students are progressing towards the learning outcomes of careers education including formal assessments of knowledge, observations and reflections (from teachers careers advisers, parents/carers and employers), and the perceptions of young people themselves. There are many high-quality assessment tools that capture different aspects of learning outcomes such as self-belief and aspiration, but they often require considerable time to complete and expertise to analyse.³

We set out to create a tool to measure students' learning outcomes from Gatsby Benchmark career programmes based on the perceptions of students. Our goal was to achieve the following:

Our starting point was the original version of the FSQ, developed in summer 2018, which was designed as a pre/post measure to be used with careers activities funded by The Careers & Enterprise Company. The development of the tool and results were published in January 2020⁴ and showed that, on average, students rated their skills more highly following careers activities. A section of this questionnaire, the Careers Readiness Index has since been developed and tested further for use in research⁵, including in the North East LEP Gatsby Pilot, where a positive correlation was found between student skills and school Gatsby Benchmark results⁶. The feedback from practitioners and students who had used the original FSQ indicated the areas that needed further work in order to create a tool that was suitable for use by practitioners in a school setting.



A short, accessible questionnaire that tracks the progress of students throughout secondary education.



Coverage of key aspects of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are important for successful transitions and careers.



Simple data insight that supports targeted intervention, evaluation of career programmes and identifies the impact of careers education.

3. <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/evaluating-projects/measuring-essential-skills/spectrum-database/>

4. <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/our-research/young-peoples-career-readiness-and-essential-skills-201819>.

5. Dodd, V., Hanson, J. & Hooley, T. (forthcoming). Increasing students career readiness through career guidance: Measuring the impact with a validated measure. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*.

6. Hanson, J. Moore, N. Clark, L. and Neary, S. (2021) An evaluation of the North East of England pilot of the Gatsby Benchmarks of good career guidance. (Gatsby Charitable Foundation).

How the FSQ was developed

1	Consultation	Careers Leaders and sector experts shared ideas on the potential value of student perception data, the topics and questions for inclusion, tailoring to transition points, implementation issues and data output.
2	Question design	With support from question design experts, detailed consideration was given to question wording, response options, questionnaire length and scoring to produce versions for testing.
3	Pilot	The revised FSQ versions were tested with 3,500 young people from Year 7 to Year 13 and structured feedback was gathered from 20 careers leaders.
4	Cognitive testing	Structured interviews with 40 young people across four age groups and including SEND explored engagement and interpretation, and tested adapted versions of questions when needed.
5	Revised FSQ	The results from the pilot and cognitive testing were used to adapt the questions and develop resources for implementing the questionnaire.

2 | Consultation

The first phase gathered the views, experiences and aspirations of careers leaders and other stakeholders to shape the FSQ, exploring the following aspects of the questionnaire and its delivery:

- The knowledge, skills and attitudes developed by career programmes
- What careers leaders want to know about students' views at points of transition in order to target careers provision
- How careers leaders would use the FSQ data

We took the original FSQ as a starting point for the consultation and also took into the account the feedback gathered from careers providers who have been using the tool since 2018.

Participants in the consultation included careers leaders, Gatsby Foundation, Department for Education, Skills Builder, Edge Foundation, Education Endowment Foundation, University of Derby, Talentino, National Centre for Social Research, CIPD, Career Development Institute, an academy trust, EngineeringUK and staff across The Careers & Enterprise Company.

Key messages

1. Careers leaders reported that they would find the FSQ data valuable and use it for a range of purposes including planning and evaluating programmes and targeting support.

A range of uses were identified, including:

Tailoring career guidance. As well as targeting specific needs, careers leaders thought that careers advisers and other staff would find the results useful for informing professional career guidance interviews and more informal career conversations. While recognising that student views may change, the FSQ data was considered helpful for starting conversations and exploring student knowledge and interests. The data needs to be handled sensitively so that students know at the outset who will see their results, be reassured that there are no 'wrong answers' or ramifications of responding a certain way and be encouraged to share their views frankly.

Planning career programmes in response to need. Careers leaders said they would use the combined results for year groups or cohorts to shape the emphasis of the careers programme. For example, understanding the views of Year 7 students would help them specify the learning outcomes of personal development activities. The responses of Year 11 students about their understanding of the options post-16 would help them to identify gaps in knowledge.

Tracking and demonstrating impact. Careers leaders would use the data for year groups to track the progress of students longitudinally as well as the progress over time for each key stage. For example, if a significant change is made to the career programme, careers leaders would use the FSQ data to assess whether this is reflected in student knowledge and skills. They would also report the combined results to the senior leadership team and governors to demonstrate the value of career guidance in supporting students to develop the skills they need to make successful transitions.

2. The core learning outcomes were identified as understanding of careers and workplaces and career management skills.

The views expressed in the consultation reflected the topics in the 2020 CDI framework of learning outcomes.⁷

In terms of career related knowledge and skills, consultees suggested rewordings of the questions in the existing tool and suggesting adding new topics including building networks, understanding the range of options post-16, the costs and benefits of learning/ career choices, and different types of recruitment and selection processes.

'Personal development' was also considered to be a learning outcome of the Gatsby Benchmarks. This encompasses self-concept (understanding own skills), goal-orientation, agency/self-efficacy, positive attitude and self-improvement. To measure each of these concepts robustly would require an unfeasibly long questionnaire but a need was identified to try and capture these different aspects to some extent.

There was less consensus over the topic of employability or essential skills. In general, careers leaders thought it important to include a section on employability skills as they are an important focus for career activities and considered essential for students to make successful transitions and manage their careers. However, it was also noted that these skills are the responsibility of the whole school to develop (so are not suitable as a direct outcome measure of the careers programme) and are difficult to measure.

3. There was strong support for the FSQ to be tailored to transition points so that the questions are pertinent.

The transition points were identified as:

Start of Year 7, to find out students' baseline level of knowledge and views at the start of secondary school. This aggregated information could be used to design responsive career programmes but also to use in conversation with feeder primary schools to encourage career-related learning. Some careers leaders said it helped to flag to the whole school community that the careers programme starts in Year 7.

Year 9 around the time of making GCSE subject choices, to encourage students to think about their strengths and preferences, to make the connection between academic subjects and careers, and to highlight needs for information and guidance.

Year 11 as students make post-16 transition plans, to identify those with and without a plan or career ideas, to identify whether students know where to find IAG, and their understanding of selection/recruitment processes.

Year 13 / age 18-19 to support students to make post-18 transitions.

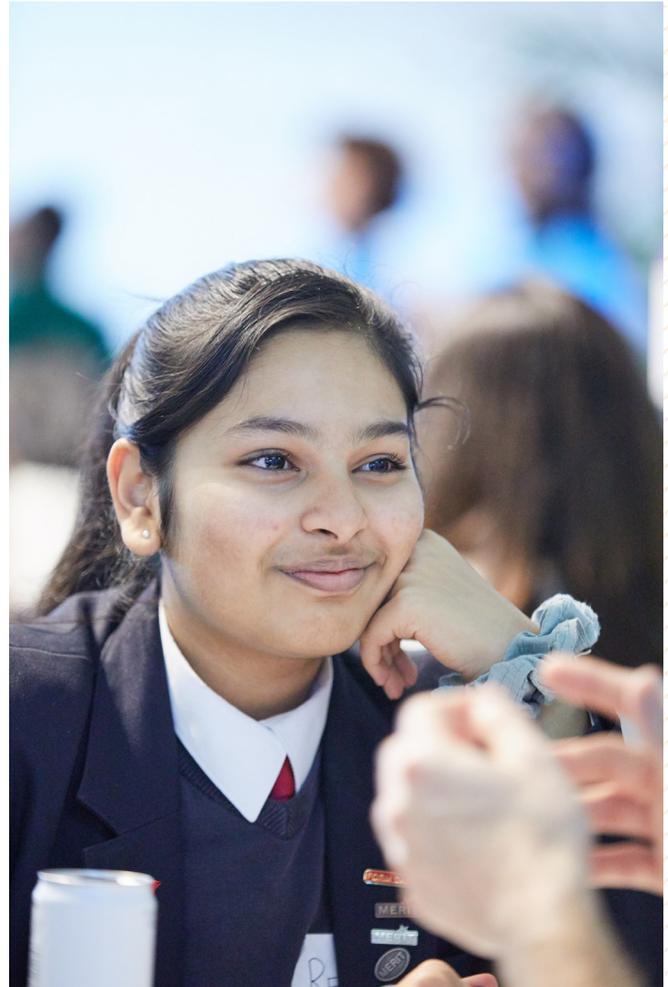
7. <https://www.thecdi.net/Careers-Framework>. The CDI framework is currently being revised.

4. There was strong support for a SEND specific FSQ which would be completed with a member of staff and used to support career conversations and planning.

Careers leaders and careers activity providers have been asking for some time for a measurement tool that they can use with students who have SEND since standard tools are often inappropriate in terms of learning outcomes or accessibility.

Experts engaged as part of the consultation raised the following guiding principles:

- Students with SEND may need a long period of time to make progress on skills.
- A questionnaire would need to be completed together with a teacher or careers leader who knows them well.
- A version of the FSQ could be integrated into EHCPs and annual reviews to support holistic progression.
- The primary purpose of a SEND FSQ would be to support career conversations and planning. The results would need to be reviewed on an individual basis rather than aggregated with other students.
- Career conversations and planning need to acknowledge the context of family, school, opportunities for further study and employment.
- Questions need to be phrased in a way that doesn't leave a young person demoralised about their skills.



3 | Question design

With the steer on topics and approach agreed, the next stage was to design high quality questions and response options to maximise engagement, reduce the tendency to give positive responses ('satisficing') and provide meaningful data. This section sets out the issues for consideration and the decisions made in developing the pilot versions of the FSQ. Question design experts from the National Centre for Social Research were commissioned to review the draft questionnaire and provide advice based on the academic research on effective question design.

Neutrality and satisficing

Issue

When questions are presented as statements with agreement scales, some responders may not engage deeply with the question and there is a tendency to give a positive response (see for example, Fowler, 1995; Converse and Presser, 1986; Saris et al 2010; Krosnick, 1991). Respondents are more inclined to think about reasons why a statement might be true and are more inclined to provide a positive rating.

Solution

Direct questions were posed instead of statements, with the response options allowing young people to indicate the extent to which this is true.

Sensitivity and variation

Issue

The response options to questions need to be sufficiently detailed to capture the full range of experiences without resulting in response bias (Converse & Presser, 1986). The combination of questions and response options need to result in a distribution of responses across the categories so that careers leaders can differentiate between students and cohorts and be able to target support.

Solution

A range of response options were provided which were tested in the pilot.

Number of response categories

Issue

There is no consensus on the ideal number of scale points (Preston and Coleman, 2000), but most studies advise 5-11. What's important is that the scale is sufficiently sensitive to differentiate between different views and experiences. Some researchers (Borgers, Hox and Sikkel, 2004) have found that offering four response options is optimal for children.

Solution

Four options were included for one set of questions (include one indicating uncertainty). For the set of questions on essential skills, an option was added for not understanding the question as this was flagged as a potential issue in the consultation.

Maximising engagement

Issue

If young people find the questionnaire difficult to follow or too long, don't understand its purpose or are concerned about the consequences of their answers, they are less likely to engage and give accurate responses, undermining the value and usefulness of the data. The academic literature sets out the importance of

- Keeping questions short to reduce the cognitive burden and prevent fatigue
- Avoiding double-barrelled questions and multiple clauses
- Removing complicated jargon that is not needed to understand the question
- Targeting the wording to the age and ability of the participants
- Avoiding ambiguity in question wording
- Using short, fully labelled scales

Solution

Questions were developed according to these principles and feedback from students sought through the pilot and cognitive testing.

Scoring the questionnaire

Issue

There are different ways to score questionnaires each with pros and cons, principally:

- raw scores (score in relation to the total marks available expressed as a percent),
- standardised/norm-referenced scores (score relative to the national average) and
- criterion-referenced scores (scores relative to a pre-determined standard). With the questionnaire designed to capture progressive learning outcomes and tailored to each stage, the priority is to assess whether students perceive themselves to have the knowledge and skills that is broadly expected at each stage.

Solution

We propose to make the high level summary scores the proportion of students responding positively to each question and overall (criterion-referenced scoring). We will also make it possible to drill down to view the responses of each student to each question.

4 | Pilot

A pilot of the Future Skills Questionnaire took place in Autumn 2020 with the aim of testing the acceptability, appropriacy and accessibility of the questionnaire with Careers Leaders and students. There were three strands to the pilot project, interviews with Careers Leaders, student completion of the questionnaires and cognitive testing.



Approach

Careers Leader interviews

The aim of the Careers Leader interviews was to explore the following topics:

- The extent to which the questions captured the learning outcomes of career programmes at different transition points
- Student engagement with the questionnaires
- Implementation of the questionnaires in schools or colleges
- How Careers Leaders would use the results

We interviewed 20 Careers Leaders from schools and colleges in Careers Hub areas across the country. We engaged with Careers Leaders from a range of mainstream schools, further education colleges and special schools to test the suitability and use of the Future Skills Questionnaires in different contexts.

Interviews took place in October and November 2020 over video call and were conducted by a member of The Careers & Enterprise Company Research team. The interviews were semi-structured and notes from the interviews were charted into a framework for analysis.

Student completion of the FSQ

Students in the participating schools and colleges were asked to complete the Future Skills Questionnaire in the first half of the Autumn Term 2020. Our aim was to check that the questionnaire resulted in a range of responses to each question. Variation in responses across different questions would suggest that students were engaging with and considering their answer for each individual question. The responses to each question would indicate whether the questions were tailored appropriately to different age groups and whether there would be sufficient variation for the data to be useful. Additional questions were added to the piloted versions of the questionnaires to capture student views.

Across the five versions of the questionnaire, we received over 3,500 responses from 21 schools and colleges spread across 10 Local Enterprise Partnership areas. The SEND version of the questionnaire was tested with a smaller number of students from special schools.

Questionnaire	Number of responses
Year 7	1392
Year 9	1276
KS4	611
KS5	272

Cognitive testing

Cognitive testing is a technique used to test and improve survey questions. During a cognitive interview, participants are asked about their thought processes when answering the questions. This indicates how participants are engaging with and interpreting the questions.

Cognitive testing of the Future Skills Questionnaire was commissioned to an external research agency, [Insightful Research](#).⁸ The questionnaires were tested with 40 students, from a range of genders, ethnicities, socioeconomic groups, and with varied future aspirations. This group of students included 8 participants from each of the year groups 7, 9, 11 and 13, as well as 8 participants with SEND requirements (2 from each target year group).

Discussions in the interviews focused on individual questions to explore understanding and identify any problems with interpretation, thoughts on practical implementation of the questionnaire and sharing of the results.

8. Insightful Research: <https://www.insightfulmarketing.co.uk/>

Results

The results from the Careers Leader interviews, student completions of the questionnaire and cognitive testing were reviewed together. Where consistent issues were highlighted, changes were made to the questionnaire or implementation guidance.

Overarching views

The Future Skills Questionnaire was considered valuable by students and Careers Leaders.

Careers Leaders thought that the Future Skills Questionnaire would support them to evaluate their careers programme, enabling them to track progress, address challenges and target additional support. The topics covered were thought to reflect the learning outcomes of their careers programmes and the inclusion of essential skills was supported.

Students highlighted that completing the questionnaire helped them reflect on their abilities and future aspirations in a way they may not have done otherwise.



It has been good to reflect on our careers programme. I liked the logical and clear way [the questionnaire] was laid out. It helps me think about how to plan our careers programme.

Careers Leader, school



[The Future Skills Questionnaire] made me think about my personal skills and how I can present them better to potential higher education centres and employers.

KS5 student

Over 3,500 students completed the questionnaires suggesting it is appropriately engaging.

Over 3,500 students completed the Future Skills Questionnaire within one month suggesting that it is engaging for young people. Students reported thinking carefully about their response and being confident answering the questions.



It was a great questionnaire and has really made me think about what I want to do in the future

Year 7 student

Highlighted across all three strands of the pilot was the need to set the questionnaire in context. For students to properly engage with the questions Careers Leaders thought it was important for them to understand the purpose and value of the questionnaire. As a result, resources will be created to support this.

Ideas for improvement centred on the wording of specific questions, these were explored in the cognitive testing and resulted in simplification of language in the revised versions.

Careers Leaders thought the questionnaires were an appropriate length and students would stay engaged for the length of time required to complete it.

The length of the Future Skills Questionnaire needs to strike a balance between capturing the key the learning outcomes of careers guidance whilst ensuring students remain engaged and complete the entire questionnaire, within the school day.

The majority of Careers Leaders were happy with the length of the questionnaire and the time taken to complete it (approximately 10 minutes). Most Careers Leaders thought that the questionnaire could be completed during a tutor or form time. The large number of students completing the questionnaire within a month suggests that Careers Leaders were able to find the time for the questionnaire to be completed, and that students were able to stay engaged and reach the end.

Careers Leaders liked the direct questions.

As highlighted in Chapter 3, in the pilot version, students were asked direct questions and invited to indicate the extent to which this was true, as opposed to statements and agreement scales. The evidence that suggests this can reduce satisficing was reflected in the feedback from Careers Leaders who preferred this approach and thought it would be more likely to result in meaningful responses. Several Careers Leaders considered agreement scales more subjective and found the results difficult to interpret.

Careers Leaders were pleased that the questionnaire was tailored by age and thought that the questions matched their expectations of the skills and knowledge of each year group.

There are five versions of the Future Skills Questionnaire, four tailored to specific year groups and another for students with SEND. The versions of the questionnaire ask about different levels of knowledge and skill and use age-appropriate wording and terminology to ensure relevant information is collected for each group.

Where issues were identified it was around terminology in some of the questions for students in Years 7 and 9.



I liked the direct questions as we can get more meaningful responses. Sometimes with agreement scales students just choose the middle answer.

Careers Leader

Evidence from the Careers Leader interviews, questionnaire results and cognitive testing highlighted specific wording that was sometimes difficult to understand.

For example, several Year 7 students struggled with the term 'contributing' in the question below on leadership skills. When it was adapted to 'taking part in', it was better understood.

Careers Leaders in colleges suggested that when the FSQ is made available to colleges there will be a need to tailor versions for college students, particularly those studying at Levels 1 and 2, by adapting the KS4 and KS5 questionnaires.

Original question:

Contributing to group discussions to reach shared decisions.

Slight potential problem with not understanding contributing. Replaced with simpler language.

Revised question:

Taking part in group discussions to reach shared decisions.

Career Leaders in special schools welcomed a tailored SEND version.

The Careers & Enterprise Company groups SEND students into those who will typically not take GCSE/ Level 2 qualifications (Careers SEND Group 1) and those who will typically take GCSE/ Level 2 qualifications (Careers SEND Group 2) in order to target resources and support. The SEND version of FSQ will be available to any student but has been designed for SEND Group 1 students.

Careers Leaders agreed that the questionnaire would be best used as part of a careers conversation, which would allow a member of staff to explain the questions to students in more detail and discuss the students' views. Additional guidance for staff, including an annotated questionnaire, was thought to be useful. While this version of the questionnaire may not be appropriate for all students, it is our intention that the guidance provided allows staff to tailor the questionnaire and support for each young person.



The questions remain the same, but the differentiation is in the delivery by staff.

Careers Leader in a special school

During the pilot, Careers Leaders in both mainstream and special schools suggested the inclusion of a question on next steps, designed to be inclusive for SEND students. As a result a question has been added with the expected career outcomes for SEND Group 1 students, including supported internships, supported apprenticeships, and supported employment.

Several Careers Leaders in special schools highlighted the importance of adding visualisations to the questionnaire. As a result, visualisations for the response options have been created and tested with students in special schools and will be included within the Future Skills Questionnaire tool.



Careers Knowledge & Skills Questions

Careers Leaders thought that the content of this section covered everything they would like to know about students career-related knowledge and skills.

The Future Skills Questionnaire is split into two sections, the first measuring student perceptions of their own careers knowledge and skills. This includes questions on post-16 options, interactions with employers and the workplace, labour market information and recruitment processes. This section reflects the learning outcomes of careers programmes.

Both students and Careers Leaders were positive about the inclusion of open-ended questions, relating to future aspirations and next steps.

Careers Leaders were keen to capture information on future aspirations and next steps using the Future Skills Questionnaire, allowing it to be the single route for capturing student perceptions. Careers Leaders suggested using this information to ensure relevant employers were engaged and targeting specific support.

Students were willing to share their aspirations and plans in this context. Although there were no specific questions in the piloted questionnaire, several students included information on their future career or educational aspirations unprompted.

To allow Careers Leaders to formally gather this insight, questions on next steps and future career aspirations have been added to the final versions of the questionnaires.



A good range of questions to put into perspective where I am at with my future plans.

KS5 student



I enjoyed the questionnaire as it made me think. When I grow up, I want to be an architect and design buildings like The Shard or Big Ben.

Year 7 student

The majority of questions were clear and understood by students. Instances of varying interpretation were successfully addressed by simplification of language or addition of definitions.

References to local area

References to local area appeared in two pilot questions to capture awareness of the local labour market, one focused on awareness of local businesses and the other about skills needs. The cognitive testing highlighted two issues with interpretation.

Younger students in Year 7 and Year 9 had a different understanding of 'local area' to what we intended. Students were more likely to perceive their local area as a very short distance from home, for example their local corner shop or café. Even after re-wording the question to specify town or city, participants still struggled to grasp the wider context. We adjusted the wording to awareness of businesses 'in your area of the country' to capture broad labour market awareness.

Some Year 11 and 13 students were confused by the emphasis on local employers in the question relating to skills. They thought it was more relevant to focus on skills needed by employers either nationally or in the sector they were interested in, and did not wish to be constrained by the opportunities in their local area. We adjusted the wording of this question to remove the reference to local area.

Networking

Careers Leaders thought many of their students would not understand the term 'networking'. This was reflected in the cognitive testing. To improve understanding this was reworded to **"Have you made contact with people who work in jobs that interest you"**, which was better understood by students.

Original question:

Are you **building a network** of people who work in industries and businesses that interest you?

The concept of building a network was not understood by most participants

Revised question:

Have you made contact with people who work in jobs that interest you

Traineeships & T-Levels

Y7, Y9 and some KS4 students from both the cognitive testing and those that completed the questionnaire, were less likely to be aware of vocational post-16 routes such as traineeships, T-Levels and apprenticeships, than they were of academic routes. Therefore it was necessary to separate out the options into different so that gaps in student knowledge could be identified.

Original question:

Do you understand your options after Year 11 including apprenticeships, A-levels, traineeships and T-levels?

This was problematic because too many items were included in a single question and levels of awareness and understanding of each option varied significantly.

Revised question: **Do you understand these options after Year 11:**

- a) Apprenticeships
- b) A-levels
- c) Traineeships
- d) T-levels
- e) Other vocational routes such as BTEC

Skills for Life & Work Questions

Careers Leaders supported including essential skills as they saw skills as an important part of the remit of their careers programme.

The essential skills section references the [Skills Builder universal framework for essential skills](#), with each question being mapped onto one of the eight essential skills. Both Careers Leaders and students supported the inclusion of essential skills as a part of the questionnaire. A number of students appreciated the opportunity to reflect on their skills and how they might present them.

Careers Leaders acknowledged that some students struggle with terminology relating to skills. As well as simplifying some of the language it was thought defining each skill would be helpful. This was considered particularly important if schools did not use the Skills Builder framework. To address this the question have avoided use of specific skill terminology, instead asking students to reflect on behaviours associated with each skill area.

In addition, the inclusion of an 'I don't know what this means' option is intended to highlight a lack of understanding. Students responding to this option may need support in identifying and articulating skills, rather than in developing them.



[This questionnaire] made me think about my personal skills and how I can present them better to potential higher education centres and employers.

KS5 student



The majority of questions were clear and understood by students. Questions relating to the creativity and problem-solving skills were most challenging.

Cognitive testing of the Future Skills Questionnaire highlighted specific areas of difficulty in the skills section. These were primarily around the creativity questions in Year 7 and Year 9 and the problem-solving questions across all age groups. This was reflected in student completions of the questionnaire with 23% of Year 7's and 16% of Year 9's reporting not understanding the creativity question, and 18% of Year 7's and 14% of Year 9's reporting not understanding the problem-solving question.

Creativity

In the cognitive testing an issue was identified with students' perception of creativity being limited to art and drawing, when the intention of the questions are to find out about creativity across a range of situations. To address this the question was adapted to define the term creativity in line with the Skills Builder framework.

Original question:

Using **creativity, in schoolwork and things you do outside of school**

Creativity as a skill was not widely understood and most tended to consider art and drawing as examples.

Revised question: **Using your own ideas, in schoolwork and things you do outside of school**

Problem Solving

In the cognitive testing an issue was identified across all year groups with participants interpreting the word 'problem' literally, thinking of maths problems and mechanical problems such as a car breaking down. The wording was adapted away from the term 'problem', for example using 'challenge' or 'task' were instead.



Implementation

Careers Leaders agreed that the Future Skills Questionnaire should be completed during the school day.

To ensure meaningful results most Careers Leaders would ask students complete the questionnaire during a dedicated slot in the school day and would make it compulsory. Most often this was form or tutor time, or during a specific careers lesson. Careers Leaders thought that the questionnaire required explanation and context and that this would be done best by a teacher in a classroom. Some Careers Leader noted that if completion was optional or done at home, there was a risk only the most engaged students would complete it, skewing the results.

Students also wanted to complete the questionnaire at school. Those taking part in the cognitive testing generally thought it would be easier to complete the questionnaire in the classroom where they could ask for help.



I think the questionnaire should be required. If it was optional a handful of students wouldn't do it- it's likely we'd need a response from these students the most.

Careers Leader

It is important for students to be understand the purpose and value of the questionnaire ahead of completion.

There was agreement between Careers Leaders that setting the questionnaire in context was important. There were concerns that students may not think about careers interventions they had experienced when completing the questionnaire and so it was suggested that providing examples of career's activities might be helpful.

Highlighted by both Careers Leaders and students was the need for young people to understand the purpose of them completing the questionnaire, and importantly what they would get out of it. This information will be included in guidance documents for Careers Leaders.

It is important for school staff to understand the purpose of the Future Skills Questionnaire, as how well students engage may come down to individual teachers and how they promote it.

Careers Leaders acknowledged that it would be school staff, most likely form tutors who would be delivering the questionnaire to students. As a part of the pilot, a PowerPoint presentation for students was provided and this was generally seen to include all of the relevant information.

Some Careers Leaders suggested having annotated versions of the questionnaires would be helpful. This would include definitions of certain terms and background on why we're asking each question. This would support staff in explaining or re-wording questions for students without losing their meaning.

Students taking part in cognitive interviews were also asked what advice they would give to teachers; answers were varied and individual but were mostly already captured in the PowerPoint and guidance documents provided.

All the Careers Leaders interviewed felt they had enough information to deliver the Future Skills Questionnaire.

Careers Leaders were provided with an implementation guide and PowerPoint presentation to deliver to students. Where additional information was requested it was around interpreting and using the results of the questionnaire. These topics will be addressed in the final versions of guidance provided.

Future Skills Questionnaire Results

Careers Leaders generally identified two ways they would use the results of the questionnaire:

- To evaluate their current programme
- To target support to specific groups or individual students

Several Careers Leaders were also keen to share the individual results back with the students, allowing them to take ownership of their own data. One Careers Leader suggested students use their results as a part of their annual action planning process.

Careers Leaders were interested in using the Future Skills Questionnaire as a way of measuring the impact of their current programme and identify any gaps in student knowledge or skills.

Careers Leaders clearly saw the value of the Future Skills Questionnaire as an evaluation tool for their careers programmes. They were interested in how the results could inform their programmes moving forward, for example by identifying gaps in student knowledge or skills and planning specific interventions or activities to address these.

Several Careers Leaders also saw the potential of using the questionnaire to highlight positive results, this could showcase activities that were working well and provide a case for these interventions moving forward.



It would be good to learn from individual questions. They could highlight gaps in student knowledge or showcase activity that is working well. It could help us know which activities are impactful.

Careers Leader

The types of visualisations available would affect how Careers Leaders would use the data. A number suggested having a breakdown of individual questions would be useful to share with their line managers, the schools senior leadership team or governors. One Careers Leader noted that, similar to the Compass tool, it would be helpful to compare their aggregate school results to national or Local Enterprise Partnership area averages.

Careers Leaders recognised that the Future Skills Questionnaire could be used to target individual support.

While most Careers Leaders were most interested in the cumulative results it was recognised that the Future Skills Questionnaire could be used to target individual support, for example refer students for a personal guidance interviews, or select candidates for a mentoring scheme. Where Careers Leaders did not think they would use individual results it was down to limitations on their time. This issue could be resolved by the visualisations of the data available in Compass+. One Careers Leader suggested it would be helpful if the tool could work out the average for your school and highlight students that fell outside of the norm.

Careers Leaders were also interested in targeting support to specific groups, as well as specific students by breaking down the data by pupil premium, gender, or SEND.

Students were generally happy for people to see their answers if they needed the information to help and give guidance.

Across the year groups, participants were divided over how private they considered their answers to be. Some did not see the information as particularly personal so were happy for anyone to see it. Others saw the information as fairly private but were happy for those who needed it to see it such as key teachers, tutors and careers advisors.



It can be shared with parents, teachers and head of year so they can help and talk to you about it.

KS5 student

A number of Careers Leaders were keen to share, at least the aggregate results back with the students and other staff members. Most highlighted form tutors, careers team members, heads of department and the senior leadership team as key stakeholders with whom to share the results. One Careers Leader highlighted that sharing the aggregate results helped support a whole school approach to careers.

The Future Skills Questionnaire will use criterion-reference scoring.

To support Careers Leader to gather these insights the Future Skills Questionnaire will use criterion reference scoring. This is a type of scoring that compares a students' response to a predetermined standard. As each version of the questionnaire has been tailored to specific age group, we expect students in each year group to answer positively. For example, in the Year 9 version, the predetermined standard for the question 'At school, do you know who to go to for information and guidance about careers?' would be either 'Yes, to some extent' or 'Yes, to a great extent'. Any students answering with these responses would have met the standard. Students who responded 'No, not yet' or 'Possibly, I'm not sure', would not have met the standard.

Compass+ will calculate for each student, the % of questions where they meet the predetermined standard i.e. answered positively. During the testing of the digital Future Skills Questionnaire tool, we will be gathering feedback on the types of data visualisations Careers Leaders would like to see within Compass+.



5 | Revised Versions of the Future Skills Questionnaire

Careers knowledge and skills

Response categories

- No, not yet
- Possibly, I'm not sure
- Yes, to some extent
- Yes, to a great extent

	Y7	Y9	KS4	KS5
Q1	Have you learned about different careers other than those of your family or carers?	Have you heard different people talk about their jobs other than those of your family or carers?		
Q2	Are you aware of some of the types of businesses or employers in your area of the country?			
Q3	Do you know what skills employers need?			
Q4	Do you know how to find out how much you could earn in different types of jobs?			
Q5	Have you thought about how jobs and careers may change in the future?			
Q6	At school, do you know who to go to for information and guidance about careers?	Do you have support to help you make education and career choices?		
Q7	Do you know any trustworthy websites that can help you decide what to do in the future?			
Q8			Have you made contact with people who work in jobs that interest you?	
Q9	Do you have ideas about what you might do for a job or career in the future?		Do you have ideas about which jobs or careers fit your interests and skills?	
	[If yes] What are your thoughts at the moment? [open text]			
Q10	Do you have ideas about what subjects you want to study for GCSE?	Do you know what subjects you want to study for GCSE? [Additional answer option: I have already chosen my GCSE subjects]	Do you have a plan for your next step after Year 11?	Do you have a plan for your next step after you leave school or college?

	Y7	Y9	KS4	KS5
Q11	Do you understand these options after Year 11: a. Apprenticeships b. A-levels c. Traineeships d. T-levels e. Other vocational routes such as BTEC			Do you understand the options available to you when you're 18: a. Intermediate apprenticeship b. Advanced apprenticeships c. Higher education/university d. Employment
Q12	Have you thought about which of these options might be right for you?			
Q13	[If yes] Which of these options do you think you will probably take, and why? [open text]			
Q14			Do you understand the short and long term impacts of your education and career choices?	
Q15			Do you know about different types of recruitment and selection processes, including interviews and assessment centres?	
Q16	Do you know how to make a good impression if you want to be chosen for a position of responsibility?		Do you know how to make a good impression when applying for a course or job?	
Q17			Do you feel confident talking about your skills in an interview?	

Essential skills for life and work

Response categories

- I don't know what this means
- I'm not able to do this yet
- I know what this is, but I'm not sure if I can do it
- I can do this quite well but could develop further
- I can do this really well



	Y7	Y9	KS4	KS5
Q1	Using your own ideas, in schoolwork and things you do outside of school.	Developing ideas by writing things down or asking yourself questions	Being creative by coming up with new or different ways of doing things	Supporting others to be creative by coming up with new ways of doing things
Q2	Solving problems, by thinking about the positives and negatives of different options	Planning a complex task by considering the range of options	Testing different ideas to solve complex tasks	Creating detailed plans to solve a challenge
Q3	Taking part in group discussions to reach shared decisions	Recognising strengths and areas for development in yourself and others	Supporting others through mentoring or coaching	Describing the type of leader you are
Q4	Working well with others by respecting different opinions	Taking part in group decision making	Helping to resolve disagreements in a team	Suggesting improvements to a team to change the way they do things
Q5	Listening actively, for example by taking notes or asking questions if you don't understand	Showing you're listening through your body language or how you respond	Being aware of how a speaker is influencing by the way they speak	Listening critically to different points of view and being aware of bias
Q6	Speaking clearly by making points in a sensible order and using appropriate language	Speaking engagingly through tone, expression and gesture	Adapting what you say depending on the response of listeners	Changing what you say to persuade people
Q7	Keeping trying when something goes wrong	Looking for opportunities in difficult situations	Identifying the positives and negatives in an opportunity	Supporting others to stay positive
Q8	Having a positive approach to new challenges	Planning tasks in order of importance to achieve goals	Creating plans with clear targets	Developing long-term strategies, taking into account strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

SEND Version

Q1	Have you learned about different careers other than those of your family or carers?	<p>No, not yet</p> <p>Probably, I'm not sure</p> <p>Yes, to some extent</p> <p>Yes, to a great extent</p>
Q2	Do you know how to find information about jobs and careers?	
Q3	Do you know how to find out how much you could earn in different types of jobs?	
Q4	Have you thought about how jobs and careers may change in the future?	
Q5	Do you understand the options you have for education and work after you leave school?	
Q6	At the moment, what do you think is the most likely next step after school/college?	
	a. Supported internship	
	b. Supported apprenticeship	
	c. Supported employment	
	d. Further education college	
	e. Extended work placement	
	f. Supported enterprise/ volunteering	
g. I'm not sure yet		
Q7	Do you have ideas about what you might do in the future?	
Q8	Do you have ideas about which careers match your interests and skills?	
Q9	Over the last year, have you developed listening, teamwork and problem solving skills?	
	Can you....	
Q10	Keep trying when something goes wrong?	I'm not able to do this yet
Q11	Be positive about new challenges?	I'm not sure if I can do it
Q12	Make a good impression on other people?	I can do this quite well but could develop further
		I can do this really well
Q13	Do you have a career plan or vocational profile with actions to help you achieve your goals? This includes plans for further learning, work or independent living.	Yes No
Q14	Do you know who to ask for support with education and career choices?	I'm not sure

5 | Next Steps

The Future Skills Questionnaire is designed for use within Compass+ to allow Careers Leaders to view the results alongside MIS, destinations and careers activity information. Since the end of the pilot in 2020, we have been developing a digital Future Skills Questionnaire tool embedded within Compass+. This includes the functionality to select students and send out questionnaires, as well as colourful and engaging digital questionnaires for students.

From April 2021 we are testing the FSQ digital tool within Compass+ with schools across the country, the aim is to test and refine the product before a full roll out in September 2021.



The Careers & Enterprise Company
2-7 Clerkenwell Green
Clerkenwell
London EC1R 0DE

careersandenterprise.co.uk