QA Review Area of Excellence Application Form

School:	**Lancaster Academy**
QA Review Date:	**3rd March 2025**

Before filling in the remaining information, please read Challenge Partners' guidance in the QA Review Handbook on applying for accreditation.

What is the title of your Area of Excellence?
Please use a short clear title with key words which can be searchable on the online School Support Directory.

Being 'READY for the Future' – careers and aspiration

Why have you identified this area as a major strength?
What makes this special or distinctive enough for leaders from other schools to travel to your school if they need your support to improve their school? What have you achieved to establish expertise in this area?

Being 'READY for the Future' is our school ethos and our READY values underpin all strategic planning both in and beyond the classroom.

Being 'READY for the Future' identifies that we want our students to value and be inspired by:

Respect - for everyone around us, listening, behaving and contributing positively.

Employability - having the core literacy and numeracy skills, being adaptable, enterprising, resilient and reliable.

Accountability - having high expectations and self-belief, taking responsibility for actions and a pride in standards.

Diversity - celebrating difference and being a team player.

Young Ambassadors - having strong opinions and ideas, participating, showing innovation and leadership, being role models.

This specialist focus nurtures students to be fully ready for a career in the world of work and all the opportunities that has to offer. We believe in every student and aim for them to be the very best at what they do. READY is part of the DNA of the school. It is celebrated in our school pledge, referenced at the start of every lesson, delivered within and beyond the curriculum, rewarded via points and certificates (reflected in Careers Portfolios) and central to our six 'READY for the Future' enrichment days.

The Academy provides students with a well sequenced and stable careers programme that is responsive to both the cohort and prevalent needs of our learners and the local LMI. The programme is designed to fully align to the CDI framework, as well as the Gatsby Benchmarks. Students receive 12 hours of timetabled careers teaching on the curriculum annually, being delivered in 6 2-hr blocks over the course of the year. Students in all year groups also receive six carefully sequenced 'READY for the Future' days during which they

benefit from a diverse range of careers opportunities appropriate to their age and stage of learning. This model supports students in gaining an understanding of a diverse range of potential future pathways, develops the soft employability skills required to enable success in the workplace while promoting aspiration and broadening horizons. Included within the READY days are: Careers Fairs, Taster workshops, University and College onsite experiences, the Living Library event where students meet external providers to prepare for options choices, 'I want to be a....' days (practical workshops involving external providers), 'I'm Going Places!' days (external careers and workplace visits), and many other bespoke activities including assemblies, visiting speakers, further workshops, mock interview reflections and STEM days.

Ensuring Careers is not a 'bolt on' that sits outside the curriculum, we have worked hard to make tangible links to careers taking place within lessons. This occurs through the Careers Wheel stickers on the front of books which signpost students to the diverse careers which stem from the subject specialism, and our standardised PPT slides. At the start of each lesson, and during relevant learning episodes, careers links and the softer employability skills required to be successful are shared and rewarded. This starts on our learning journey slide which signposts careers that require the knowledge/skills/understanding that are being taught in that lesson, while also emphasising the 'soft employability skills' that are relevant to learning. This thread remains live throughout lessons with the teacher rewarding ready points to students for developing the various READY skills. Ultimately by doing this, we are keeping 'live' in our lessons what is required to be an employable individual in addition to the academic-based learning within each subject discipline. Due to the diversity of our cohort, we recognise that not all students will leave Lancaster and follow an academic route or have a clear career pathway in mind, therefore we want to instill upon our students how to be employable and positive 'ambassadors' for themselves as they navigate life after Lancaster; they are prepared for their future.

All students in year 11 and some students and many DA & SEND students from yrs 8-10 are offered at least one 1:1 career guidance meeting. These are delivered both by LEBC and Claire Hurst, our level 6 trained careers guidance practitioner. Students are able to self-refer for a careers meeting or can be referred by other staff in the academy.

Work experience is an integral part of the KS4 careers ready programme and takes place in the summer term of year 10. While we employ the services of LEBC to oversee and source most placements, we also encourage our students to make connections through their family and friends' network. Students are prepared for this undertaking throughout the year, with careers lessons, assemblies, and activities within the Ready Day programme. The Work Experience process provides valuable insights into the world of work and the extra aspects that are often not considered, such as having the independence to approach employers, attend interviews and interact with adults in a professional manner. The experience creates a positive change in students on their return recognisable through increased maturity as they move into yr 11 and begin the college application process in the autumn term.

To continue students' preparation for life beyond Lancaster, we ensure that students get opportunities to practise their interview techniques. These essential skills are introduced with the Living Library experience in Y8 and developed through the careers fairs in Y10 & Y11 and their work experience applications. Further work occurs in yr 11 during tutor time, READY days and PSHE lessons to improve student techniques and culminates with the mock interviews in January, enabling our students to be confident and prepared for the college/apprenticeship interviews from February onwards.

We are proud that throughout the academy, students have access to a wide range of visual resources in the form of displays, as well as and college and university materials – through

the careers mobile hub, which gives students the independence to inform themselves about their future and the local and regional options open to them. Keeping our students informed about opportunities related to careers and career planning is crucial, so important notices, webinars, extra work experience opportunities are shared through our school bulletin but will also be emailed out to students and uploaded to the academy website where appropriate.

With regards career curiosity, something we're always trying to stimulate, we are launching the Xello careers platform this year, which we are very excited about. Having attempted and evaluated previous platforms in the past, we are optimistic that this platform will help us embed and encourage independent learning and research practices in our students. We have launched this in stages so far this academic year, and we will have all students onboarded by the end of the year. The aim is that this will become part of the Lancaster Careers 'diet' that is expanded to include parents, making sure they can support their children too with their curiosity.

To make sure parents are informed about the key events for their children in Y11, we send them a calendar checklist in the September, which is uploaded to the academy website, showing a month-by-month breakdown of key dates for the year including events they and/or their children can attend, along with the PS16 application information and deadlines.

We have also continued to build on our ambassadors programme, with a team of students in KS4 who are careers ambassadors. Their roles include guiding students on the recently launched Xello careers platform, trialling out lesson ideas and activities, aiding with the organisation of displays work, and being active during our Ready days and especially with networking with our invited business representatives at our business breakfasts. Students also prepare materials and generate ideas as to what sorts of activities and resources they would like available – which is invaluable as it comes directly from the students' perspective.

Over time we have nurtured and grown many business, industry FE and HE partnerships. This collaboration has enabled us to give students multiple opportunities to meet and learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace while also facilitating students with first-hand experience of the world of work. Recently we have hosted 'Connect and Grow' Business Breakfasts which give our local providers the opportunity to enhance their own business contacts while allowing our student ambassadors to get a real feel for networking. This has not only given our providers the opportunity to connect with others but also the platform to speak and promote their own businesses and ambitions.

We actively engage with our higher education partners, such as De Montfort University, by organising trips for our Y10 students on the January Ready day to experience a taster day. We use this day also to get students to local FE and apprenticeship providers. Taking this further we engage the services of the Pathways team for widening participation for raising the aspirations of our disadvantaged cohort of students in both key stages. This could be through workshops delivered by DMU as part of their Evolve programme or 1:1 support and workshop preparation for work experience. We also share and encourage other faculties within the academy to take advantage of these offers as it all continues the process of enriching the students' experience of careers and career planning.

Working with colleagues from the 'Unbox Your Future' programme we have been continuing to nurture business connections, linking them to the relevant faculties as extra enrichment to the careers programme. This initiative aims to excite and engage students into looking at different sectors of the labour market, giving them a business/subject related

project to complete within a given timeframe. We began in 2023-2024 with The National Trust and are now expanding this academic year to include employers in the care, sports and IT sectors.

Despite the intensive input, there are still some students who lack resilience and aspiration and therefore struggle to buy-in to the process. Leaders work hard to identify these students early and look at different ways to engage, discuss, coach and mentor them to improve their outcomes and prevent them from becoming potentially NEET. We evaluate the impact of this bespoke programme each year through tracking student outcomes and cases studies of individuals. We identify patterns and utilise this information to support the needs of future cohorts through early intervention.

Looking to capitalise on our former students, we have continued collating the details of former students, capturing their contact information as they move on from the academy. This is reported on by our local Connexions service, when they do the census in November each year. From this we are able to see emerging patterns and trends, as well as tracking the NEET statistics. Capturing this information is allowing us to create a network of students, from whom our current students can learn and aspire to follow in some of their career pathways. We are actively seeking the support of our partners in the CEIAG hub for advice and guidance on how we can move this on further. As yet, this is still in its infancy, but the eventual goal is to have former students assist in delivering the activities on the Ready days, and to expand this further, aligning to specific faculties, so that their real-life experiences become part of the fabric of our students' career-planning journeys.

What evidence is there of substantial and sustained impact on pupils' academic and/or other outcomes?

Having a positive impact on the future lives of our students is at the heart of all we do. As such we continually reflect on the offer available to our students, review the impact and make changes to ensure both the quality of provision and sustainability of the programme. Positively engaging with Compass+ ensures we carefully consider our careers offer, make adaptations as necessary and strategically plan for improvement. We update our Compass+ evaluations at least termly to ensure we are fully compliant across the Gatsby benchmarks. The careers curriculum is comprehensive and fully aligns to the CDI framework.

We have recently been awarded the Quality in Careers Standard and the Excellence in Personal Development Award in recognition of the opportunities provided that enable our students to be READY for their chosen future pathways. The full reports will be available during the Challenge Partners visit however extracts from these include:

'It was a privilege to visit The Lancaster Academy today and a pleasure to assess the school as 'Fully meeting the (Quality in Careers) Standard'. The enthusiasm for CEIAG at The Lancaster Academy is palpable, the careers programme is valued throughout the school and has its own identifiable logo. There is a robust approach to planning, developing and evaluating all aspects of the careers programme. Feedback is actively sought from all stakeholders, and all have complete faith their input is listened to and acted on where appropriate. There is a joined-up, whole school approach to career-related learning which is strongly embedded in the curriculum. Direct links to career opportunities and the key transferable skills needed to succeed in the world of work are well understood by staff and students. It is widely agreed that staff are passionate about careers and the prospects of their cohort. Students expect teachers to talk about how subjects can relate to careers and be realistic about career progression. Communication relating to CEIAG is efficient and effective.

CH is described as friendly, knowledgeable, approachable and an amazing source of support by students, staff and parents. It is very clear why Leicester LEP recommend the institution become a 'Beacon' school. The Lancaster Academy delivers outstanding career-related learning to the benefit of its students, staff, and the wider community. It is an exemplar of best practice. The final words come from school students who said "The best thing about the careers programme is it makes you curious about the world of work and the things you can do. It raises aspirations and makes you feel confident about what you can do in the future".

Alexandra Kenneth and Shaun Riley Friday 5th July 2024 Quality in Careers Standard

'Lancaster Academy delivers a carefully sequenced and highly responsive programme of personal development and skills. At the heart of this offer is an expectation that pupils enact READY values: those of respect, employability, accountability, diversity and young ambassadors. These are displayed throughout the school to ensure that these are visible and shared. Sitting behind each value is a codified and carefully considered programme of learning. These values are explored dynamically through six "drop down" days where the whole school come together to explore READY values in action. Pupils across the school express great enthusiasm for these days. Additionally, the schools offer for SMSC is Interwoven within the fabric of READY values and the school pledge.

Excellence in Pupil Development Award – Vina Sharma - Thursday 4th July 2024

The academy links effectively with external partners from business and higher education. It has developed and sustained an extensive network of organisations. These organisations contribute to the school in several ways. For example, the "Collaborate and Grow" business breakfasts stimulate pupil knowledge and understanding of employment and entrepreneurship. External providers provide feedback which is thoroughly explored after each contact in school. Partners comment regularly on how they "love visiting the school" and that what is offers pupils is "awesome". Leaders ensure that any engagement with business has a philanthropic focus – charities feature prominently and proactively. For example, the school has already selected their charity for the next academic year as Heartwize. As a result, the curriculum across all subjects and key stages will be reviewed to consider which common threads might be explored and build on the work of this charity.

The careers curriculum is subject to regular review (both through internal learning walks, work scrutiny and pupil voice) and external review from the Learning without limits Trust. All pupils enjoy careers portfolios which accompany them through the school and ensure that Gatsby benchmarks are frequently met. This is a school that has effectively created both formal review cycles and informal responsive processes to ensure that personal development offers are the very best.'

All of our students are proud to have a Careers Portfolio which recognises their journey and achievements both in and beyond school. The portfolio contains a CV which is updated annually, a timeline of events or 'Careers Journey' so they know what they can expect during their time at Lancaster, a Knowledge Organiser which provides them with important information and guidance and then the work and achievement certificates that are awarded and generate themselves over time. Students regularly engage with these portfolios and present them at interviews to support them in exemplifying their READY characteristics.

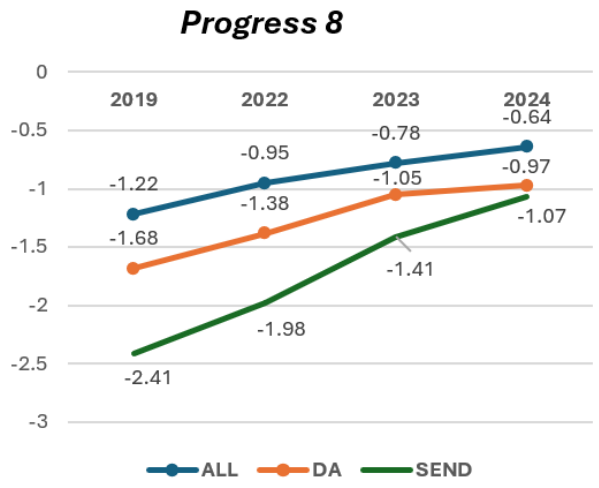
Students and parents at Lancaster Academy provide overwhelmingly positive feedback on how well prepared they feel for their next phase of education or employment and the careers opportunities provided by the academy to enable them to get there. This is evidenced through termly parental and student feedback questionnaire where 86% of students say they feel supported in learning about careers and the world of work and parental questionnaire where

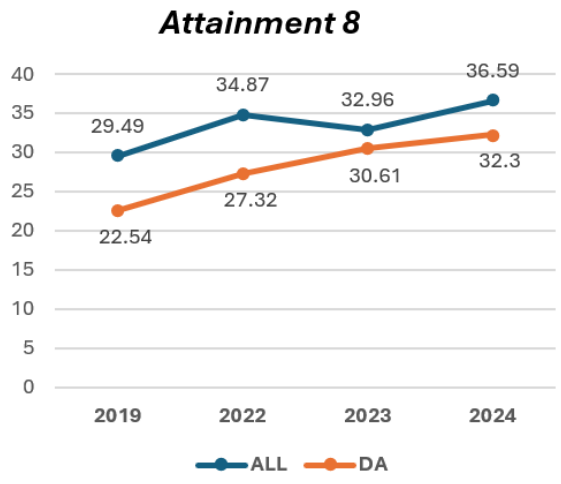
87% of parents (321 respondents) agreed or strongly agreed that the Academy supports learners with their future career choice.

The PASS survey completed by students twice per year equally evidences that students demonstrate 'high satisfaction' levels in response to all aspects of their perceptions of school and learning experience and importantly have high satisfaction levels when responding to the statement "Working hard in school will help me in the future".

	Overall percentiles								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
***PASS* Factor**	Feelings about school	Perceived learning capability	Self-regard as a learner	Preparedness for learning	Attitudes to teachers	General work ethic	Confidence in learning	Attitudes to attendance	Response to curriculum demands
Percentile score	43.3	61.2	47.3	60.5	57.4	36.3	66.4	50.3	45.2

In terms of academic outcomes, we work tirelessly to support our students in making good academic progress, positive choices and to raise aspiration irrespective of starting points, background and barriers. While the extreme mobility and vulnerability of our cohorts can skew the data, the progress that our students make during their time at Lancaster is positive and the systems we have put in place to close gaps in learning are continually developing to meet need and as such GCSE results show sustained improvements in both progress and attainment over time. The performance of Disadvantaged and SEND learners also continues to improve year on year.





Upon arrival at Lancaster a large percentage of students have been challenged with a turbulent history in relation to both their education and social circumstance, this in itself creates huge vulnerability that goes beyond the disadvantage, EAL and SEND needs that many of our students have also to overcome. As a school we are relentless in challenging student perceptions in terms of what is possible for our students and we foster ambition and resilience irrespective of circumstance. Over 67% of our yr 11 students 2024 arrived to us part way through their secondary education, having had to navigate at least two secondary schools, typically beyond the UK. The NEET figures fall slightly below national and city data, however based on the multiple vulnerabilities of our students we are extremely proud that the vast majority are nurtured and stabilised and go on to achieve successful outcomes.

CHALLENGE PARTNERS

	Nov first year after leaving school (Not Participating in Education)	Nov first year after leaving school NEET	Jan second year after leaving school SEET	% of students who go on to study a L1 Qualification	% of students who go on to study a L2 Qualification	% of students who go on to study a L3 Qualification	% of students who go on to study an ESOL
2019	7.9%	4.0%	11.4%	33.1%	31.4%	26.2%	3.2%
2020	6.3%	4.9%	8.3%	19.5%	13.8%	60.9%	N/A
2021	5.5%	4.6%	13.2%	18.4%	11.9%	61.2%	1.5%
2022	6.9%	7.1%	9.6%	25.7%	19.3%	49.2%	3.2%
2023	5.9%	6.5%		13.6%	30.5%	53.5%	0.5%

What can the school offer to other schools to support their development in this area?

What would leaders from other schools gain from a Leadership Development Day on your proposed Area of Excellence? What would they take away to help them make changes at their own schools? Is it transferable?

As appropriate to other schools need we could provide:

- Bespoke visits
- CPD
- Advice and guidance either face to face or via virtual visits

In areas including:

- Planning to meet Gatsby benchmarks
- CDI framework
- Developing careers within the curriculum
- Ways to engage external businesses and educational provision
- Weaving careers and aspiration into the whole school ethos
- Introducing careers enrichment days into the curriculum

How have you already shared your practice beyond your own school? What has been the extent of the impact of this?

We have:

- shared our practice across the Trust schools facilitating bespoke visits, leading and contributing to hub meetings and providing training, guidance and careers resources on most aspects above.
- shared our 'READY for the Future' day programme and resources within the MAT enabling our schools to remodel aspects of these days to enhance their own curriculum and meet the Gatsby benchmarks.
- hosted other schools within the trust enabling their students to participate in our Careers Fairs.
- shared good practice, including our own 'READY for the Future' day model at the Leicester and Leicestershire CEIAG Hub half termly including presenting on 'How to create careers curiosity through game play', 'Subliminal Messaging – Careers and Aspiration' and 'Engaging with Business'.

- On a recent Challege Partners review in NWL the Principal and Lancaster was acknowledged as having been recognized as a place other schools may wish to visit to see how careers and work-related learning can be embedded into everyday practice
- The Principal was invited to be part of a T-MET conference, during which our CEO 'promoted' the work we do at Lancaster

How will you ensure that you remain at the forefront of excellence in this area over the three year accreditation period?

We will aim to maintain the Careers Mark standard going forward, by actioning the recommendations put forward in the final report.

- Continue to take CPD opportunities to ensure that our programme remains current, relevant and appropriate for our students. This means liaising with MAT, local and regional colleagues, and looking further outward to gauge the national landscape; making use of the CDI resources.
- Further develop the alumni aspect to the careers programme, by seeking a higher level of involvement from those individuals.
- Continue to look at ways we can further engage our parents/carers with the careers programme, by enabling them access to the Xello programme, but also inviting them to get more involved in the delivery of activities on the Ready days.

Who is the staff lead in this area?	
Name:	**Claire Walsh**
Title:	**Assistant Principal**
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