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# Careers in the curriculum – the difficult fourth benchmark

Carol Davenport

The Gatsby Careers Benchmarks are now part of the DfE's Careers guidance strategy<sup>1</sup>. These 8 benchmarks will ensure that all maintained secondary schools have a stable careers programme for pupils aged 11 upwards, led by a named careers lead. Science teachers might therefore be forgiven for thinking that they don't need to think too much about careers in their situation – it is 'someone else's problem'<sup>2</sup>.

That is not the case. The fourth benchmark, *Linking curriculum learning to careers*, means that including careers in their lessons is now very much the science teachers' 'problem'. Except that it doesn't have to be seen as a problem. There are at least two very good reasons for science teachers to include careers in their subject teaching.

The first is that many students cite their teachers as an important source of careers information and advice<sup>3</sup>. So, even if teachers don't realise it, their

students may be taking careers advice from what goes on in the classroom and is included in the teaching. By using careers to expand the contexts used to illustrate subject content, students will hear about a wider range of possible jobs obtained through studying science. Science teachers have a real advantage, because everything they teach has a 'real world' link that allows a straightforward link to careers.

The second good reason to include careers contexts in their subject teaching is linked to the changes to the assessment objectives in new GCSE specifications. The increase in marks for application of knowledge (AO2<sup>4</sup>) means that students will be examined on subject content in contexts that they may not have met previously. By introducing different career contexts – jobs, companies or activities – students can get used to looking beyond the surface details and picking out the subject content that they have been taught previously.

In the original North East pilot of the Gatsby Benchmarks, benchmark 4 was the one that all schools and colleges struggled with the most. To help, at NUSTEM we are developing a range of end-of-topic question worksheets, which set subject knowledge questions in a company context<sup>5</sup>, so that students can see where the topic that they are studying

might lead. Elsewhere, I've also described a simple photograph-based activity that teachers can use at the start or end of a lesson to help students make links between what they have been learning and careers<sup>6</sup>.

Other organisations are also developing resources that can be added into lessons, and a good first port of call is the STEM Learning eLibrary<sup>7</sup>.

The fourth careers benchmark is challenging, but it is a challenge that science teachers are more than capable of meeting.

## References

<sup>1</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/748474/181008\\_schools\\_statutory\\_guidance\\_final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748474/181008_schools_statutory_guidance_final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>An idea popularised by Douglas Adams in *Life, The Universe and Everything* when explaining how humans are excellent at ignoring things that they don't understand or want to deal with as being 'someone else's problem'.

<sup>3</sup><https://wellcome.ac.uk/sites/default/files/monitor-wave2-full-wellcome-may13.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas and scientific enquiry, techniques and procedures.

<sup>5</sup><https://nustem.uk/careers/>

<sup>6</sup><https://eic.rsc.org/ideas/including-careers-in-the-curriculum/3009375.article>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.stem.org.uk/stem-careers#subject-resources>



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