

BAKER AWARD

for Employability

Preparing students for the
world of work.



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Introduction

Objectives

- Empower UTCs, schools and employers: Enable participating UTCs, schools and their industry partners to play a central role in assessing and accrediting student skills and competencies.
- Enhance relevance: Ensure that the award is closely aligned with industry standards and employer needs, ensuring the award remains relevant. The award deliberately sits outside the GCSE or examination framework to be free from the constraints of traditional school accountability measures.
- Increase flexibility: Provide an adaptable framework that can accommodate various technical and vocational education environments.

The Baker Award for Employability recognises and celebrates vital elements of technical education which prepare young people with the skills, knowledge, and attributes to be successful in the world of work. Students achieving the Baker Award demonstrate high levels of employability, and the award puts them at the front of the queue for higher and degree apprenticeships.

The award incorporates a combination of work experience placements, employer-led projects, encounters, and the development of competencies required in the workplace such as teamwork and problem-solving. The award is built around three progressive levels – Bronze, Silver and Gold – providing students with a clear pathway to develop their skills, confidence and leadership.

By aligning the award with industry standards and providing comprehensive support, this award aims to create a more relevant and flexible recognition system that benefits participating students. Already, key employers such as JCB, Amazon, Enginuity, Zurich, and AtkinsRealis have added their names to the organisations supporting the award. It is intended that this be expanded to as many employer partners as possible.

The Baker Award builds on and uses existing best practice, such as the [Gatsby Benchmarks](#) and [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) to reward learners for developing and demonstrating the key skills and competencies that best prepare them for future success. It also provides evidence for Ofsted's Personal Development & Well-being evaluation area.

This document outlines the key aspects of the Baker Award.

Benefits

For schools

- Consistent with, and builds on, the Gatsby Benchmarks.
- Consistent with, and aligned to, the Skills Builder Universal Framework.
- Provides evidence for Ofsted's Personal Development & Well-being evaluation area.
- Supports grading of Post-16 Provision.
- Strengthens partnerships with employers.

For students

- Evidence of employability: the elements of the Award are increasingly recognised by employers as those most desired in early career recruits. With these elements, students will be at the front of the queue for higher and degree apprenticeships.
- Engage directly with employers and industry professionals, building networks and gaining insight into future career opportunities.
- Access to real-time, relevant careers guidance with introductions to future technology.

For employers

- Influence over the development of future workforce skills.
- Access to a highly-skilled talent pipeline at UTCs and mainstream schools.
- Opportunities for structured staff engagement in education, supporting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) objectives through involvement as Baker Award assessors.

Age range

The Baker Award is structured to assess students at specific educational milestones:

- Bronze —Typically in Years 9 or 10
- Silver — Typically in Years 10 or 12.
- Gold — Typically in Year 12.

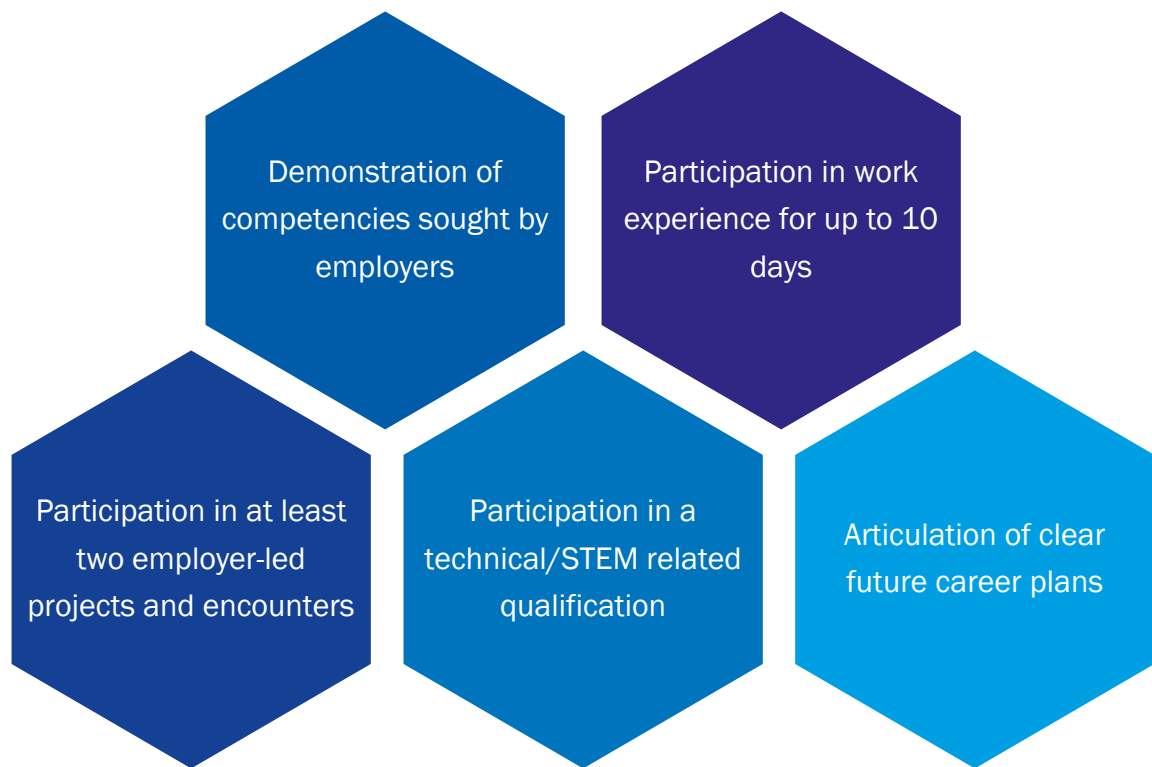
The Gold award requires a sophisticated level of response and understanding, suitable for students at this stage. The 'future career plans' assessment assumes participants are at a critical transition point in their educational journey.

Out-of-year group entries

While primarily designed for students in years 9, 10 and 12, exceptions may be considered if the participants meet the required criteria and demonstrate the necessary understanding.

Components of the award

The award features the following components and criteria, reflecting the evolving needs of industry and the professional standards sought by employers. Detailed information can be found on the subsequent pages.



Success criteria - Bronze

	Bronze	Assessment
Technical qualifications	Technical or vocational qualification at Levels 1 or 2 (participation in a STEM-rich setting will be considered for students entering at Level 1). Or, as an alternative route, an additional 5-hour employer-led project, or an additional 5-hour work experience placement.	Students will complete a technical or vocational qualification at Level 1 or Level 2, such as a BTEC or Cambridge National.
Work experience	5 days, up to 100% can be virtual through recognised partners.	Completion of witness statement by hosting employer. Reflective statement by candidate, both to be uploaded on Grofar.
Employer-led projects	Minimum of two employer-led projects of flexible type and duration, with a combined minimum duration of 10 hours.	Centre to produce standardised project brief template detailing how the project meets the competencies. Reflective candidate statement. Both to be uploaded on Grofar.
Encounters	Minimum of 2 structured encounters.	Logged on Grofar.
Careers-based interview	Reflective conversation with form tutor or subject tutor, held internally	Witness statement, to be uploaded on Grofar.

Success criteria - Silver

	Silver	Assessment
Technical qualifications	Technical or vocational qualification at Level 2 or above, and/or specified STEM subjects, including science and maths.	For example, BTEC, Cambridge National, T Level. Submitted by centre via student registration form (Grofar platform).
Work experience	10 days, up to 50% can be virtual through recognised partners.	Completion of witness statement by hosting employer. Reflective statement by candidate, both to be uploaded on Grofar.
Employer-led projects	A minimum of two employer-led projects of flexible type and duration, with a combined minimum duration of 18 hours. At least one must include a visit to the supporting employer.	Centre to produce standardised project brief template detailing how the project meets the competencies. Reflective candidate statement. Both to be uploaded on Grofar
Encounters	Minimum of 3 structured encounters, plus 1 employer visit.	Logged on Grofar.
Careers-based interview	Internal Careers, Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) interview with employer partner.	Standardised pro forma completed by employer partner and uploaded on Grofar.

Success criteria - Gold

	Gold	Assessment
Technical qualifications	Technical or vocational qualification at Level 3 or above, or A Level STEM subjects, in Year 12.	For example, BTEC, Cambridge National, T Level. Submitted by centre via student registration form (Grofar platform).
Work experience	10 days, up to 20% can be virtual through recognised partners.	Completion of witness statement by hosting employer. Reflective statement by candidate, both to be uploaded on Grofar.
Employer-led projects	A minimum of three employer-led projects of flexible type and duration, with a combined minimum duration of 27 hours. At least one must include a visit to the supporting employer.	Centre to produce standardised project brief template detailing how the project meets the competencies. Reflective candidate statement. Both to be uploaded on Grofar.
Encounters	Minimum of 4 structured encounters, plus 1 employer visit.	Logged on Grofar.
Careers-based interview	Externally facilitated interview.	Standardised process facilitated by Baker Dearing Educational Trust.

Competency framework

The Baker Award for Employability's competency framework is built directly on the [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#), the UK's leading, research-backed model for teaching, developing and measuring employability skills. This replaces the award's previous model of six key areas and gives the Baker Award a shared, common language with the wider [Gatsby Benchmarks](#) and Careers & Enterprise Company landscape.

The Skills Builder Universal Framework defines eight essential skills that are needed in any job. Each skill is broken down into a sequence of teachable, measurable steps, taking a learner from absolute beginner through to mastery. Students will be able to demonstrate the skills they have achieved on Grofar.

The 8 essential skills



Listening: The receiving, retaining and processing of information or ideas.

Speaking: The oral transmission of information or ideas.

Problem Solving: The ability to find a solution to a situation or challenge.

Creativity: The use of imagination and the generation of new ideas.

Adapting: Using tactics and strategies to overcome setbacks and keep working towards a goal.

Planning: Setting clear, tangible goals and devising a robust route to achieving them.

Leadership: Supporting, encouraging and developing others to achieve a shared goal.

Teamwork: Working cooperatively with others towards a shared goal.



Technical/STEM qualifications

Participation in a technical/STEM-rich setting is a key component of the Baker Award for Employability.

- **Bronze:** Technical or vocational qualification at Level 1 or Level 2. For students entering at Level 1, participation in a STEM-rich setting will be considered, even if it does not fall fully within the vocational or technical qualification framework. As an alternative route, students may instead complete an additional 5-hour employer-led project or an additional 5-hour work experience placement.
- **Silver:** Technical or vocational qualification at Level 2 or above, and/or specified STEM subjects, including science and maths.
- **Gold:** Technical or vocational qualification at Level 3 or above, including A Level STEM subjects, in Years 12 or 13.

Evidence

- Awarding centre submits student registration form confirming qualification pathway.
- No requirement to complete the qualification, only to make progress towards completion during the Baker Award timescale.

Recognised qualification types

AAQs, EPQs (technical theme), BTECs, City & Guilds (C&G), Cambridge Technicals and Nationals, T Levels, STEM A Levels, and similar recognised qualifications.



Work experience

Participation in work experience and virtual work experience (VWEX) is a key component of the Baker Award.

- Bronze: 5 days (up to 100% VWEX)
- Silver: 10 days (up to 50% VWEX)
- Gold: 10 days (up to 20% VWEX)

The specific number of employers can be flexible, especially if the placement is shared between a lead employer and others due to capacity constraints, or if students need to gain exposure to different settings.

Evidence

- Completion of witness statement by host employer.
- Completion of reflective statement by candidate.
- Discussion during careers-based interview with an employer partner, organised by the UTC/school.

Utilising virtual work experience (VWEX)

- Equal access: VWEX removes barriers like geography, cost, and limited employer capacity, ensuring all students can access work experience.
- Growing legitimacy: Updated Gatsby Benchmarks and T Level requirements now recognise virtual experiences as meaningful encounters with employers.
- Flexibility in delivery: Up to 20% of T Level placements (50% for digital T Levels) can be completed remotely, creating opportunities for employers to expand high-quality VWEX.
- Student benefits: VWEX offers interactive tasks, professional insights, and certificates that build employability skills and support career aspirations.
- Employer advantages: Companies gain from early talent engagement, wider diversity in applicants, and reduced recruitment costs through VWEX.

Employer-led projects

Participation in employer-led projects is a key component of the Baker Award for Employability.

Definition

- A minimum of two or three employer-led projects, with a combined minimum duration of 10 or 27 hours (depending on the award completed by the student).
- Must be employer-led with a 'real life' brief. Awarding body-set projects are insufficient.
- 'Off the shelf' projects available from Baker Dearing; e.g., DSTL.
- The Baker Award project team to visit (potentially virtually) all Baker Award centres to verify employer-led projects in the first year of participation.

Award level requirements

- Bronze: Minimum of two employer-led projects of flexible type and duration, with a combined minimum duration of 10 hours (2 x 5 hours).
- Silver: Minimum of two employer-led projects of flexible type and duration, with a combined minimum duration of 18 hours (2 x 9 hours). At least one must include a visit to the supporting employer.
- Gold: Minimum of three employer-led projects of flexible type and duration, with a combined minimum duration of 27 hours (3 x 9 hours). At least one must include a visit to the supporting employer.

Evidence

Centre-produced project brief using a Baker Dearing-provided pro forma, showing how requirements are met.

- Reflective candidate statement on project outcomes and skills developed.
- Employer verification (where an employer has hosted or set the project).



Careers-based interviews

Articulation of clear future career plans is a key component of the Baker Award.

- Bronze: Reflective conversation with form or subject tutor.
- Silver: Internal Careers Information, Advice & Guidance (CIAG) interview with employer partner. Questions set by Baker Dearing.
- Gold: Externally facilitated and centralised interview by Baker Award trained assessors. Questions set by Baker Dearing.



Encounters

Encounters are meaningful, structured interactions that give students real insight into the world of work, further education and industry, and they broaden industry exposure in support of the Gatsby Benchmarks.

Types of encounter

- Employer talks: Industry speakers sharing careers and work-life insight.
- Workplace visits: On-site visits to an employer or industry facility.
- FE progression: Activities exploring further education and apprenticeship pathways.
- Real-world challenges: Employer-set projects and industry challenges.

Requirements

- Bronze: Minimum of 2 encounters.
- Silver: Minimum of 3 encounters, plus 1 employer visit.
- Gold: Minimum of 4 encounters, plus 1 employer visit.

Supporting employers



Part of the
Enginuity Group



Award timeline

By September 2026:

- (1) Sign up to the Baker Award.
- (2) Sign and return the Data Sharing Agreement. This is key to gaining access to the Grofar digital platform to register students.
- (3) Register students on Grofar.

By October half term:

- (1) Sign and return the Data Sharing Agreement by 9 October 2026. This is key to gaining access to the Grofar digital platform to register students.
- (2) Register students on Grofar.
- (3) Have plans in place to deliver the first employer project.

By Christmas:

- (1) Have delivered at least one employer project.
- (2) Have plans in place to facilitate work experience for all students in the spring/summer.

By Easter:

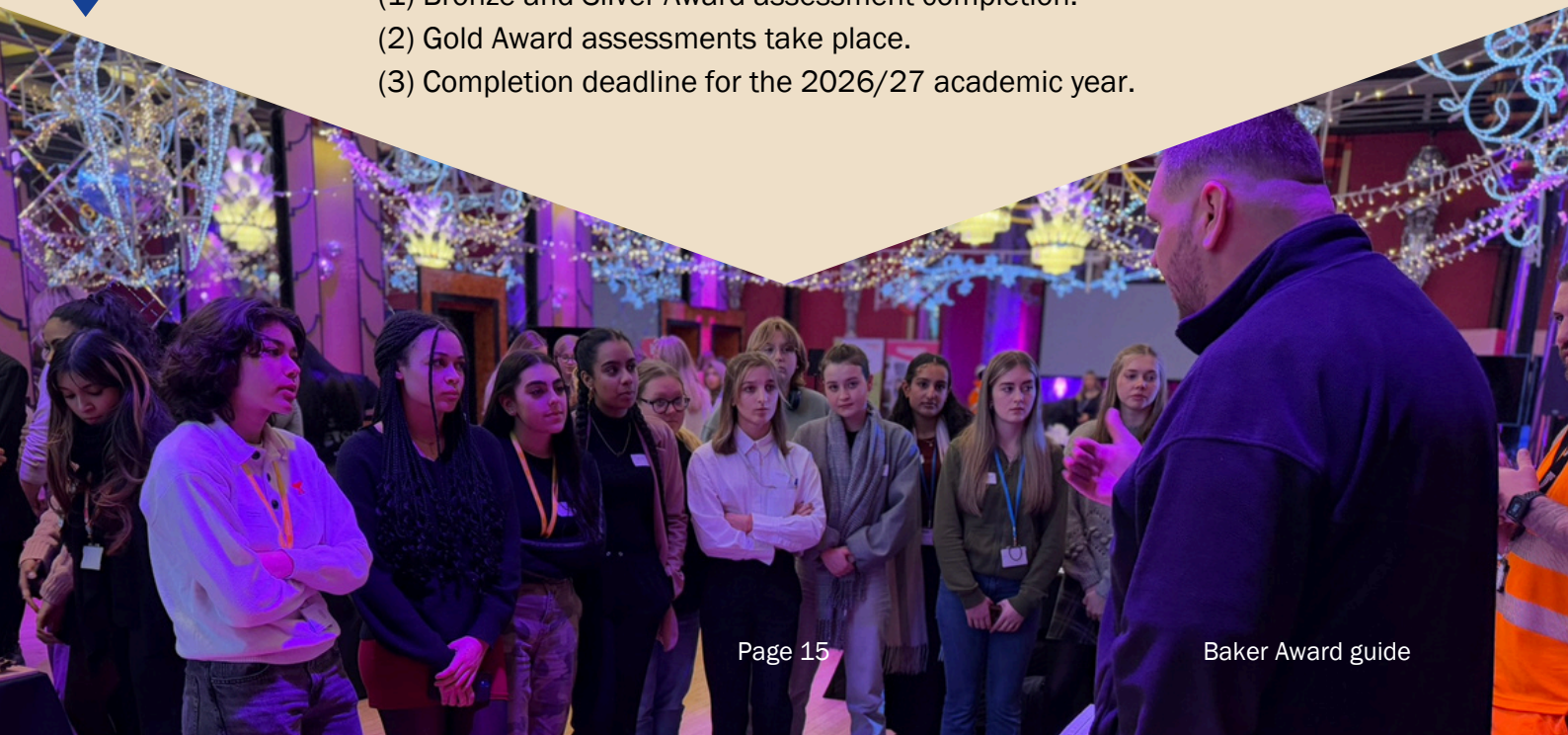
- (1) Have delivered at least two employer projects.
- (2) Have confirmed dates for all candidate's work experience.
- (3) Have planned dates for reflective conversations/internal interviews to take place by October half term.

By end of academic year:

- (1) Have delivered all of the required employer projects.
- (2) Have ensured students have completed work experience, or have plans for this to take place before September 2027.
- (3) Consolidated all witness statements and other evidence documentation.

By October 2027:

- (1) Bronze and Silver Award assessment completion.
- (2) Gold Award assessments take place.
- (3) Completion deadline for the 2026/27 academic year.



Information for participating UTCs and schools

Grofar launch

5 October 2026, 4pm

Data sharing agreement returned by

9 October 2026

Term 1 check-in

16 November 2026, 4pm

Term 2 check-in

1 February 2027, 4pm

Term 3 check-in

6 April 2027, 4pm

Assessment preparation meeting

19 April 2027, 4pm

Gold Award assessment

October 2027

Award ceremony

January 2028

Support provided to assist with the implementation of the Baker Award for Employability:

- On-hand advice from the Baker Dearing project team.
- Assistance with the provision of employer projects.
- Access to the Grofar digital platform, launching September 2026 at no cost to UTCs, providing digital evidence portfolios and reporting.



Contact and support

For any additional queries, and project outline submission, please contact Aysen via agiritli@bakerdearing.org



Baker Dearing
Educational Trust