

# Overview of the UK Career Development Awards

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# Purpose of the UK Career Development Awards

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The UK Career Development Awards (UKCDAs) have been the leading recognition of outstanding work in the profession for many years.

The awards:

- Recognise the achievements of individuals, teams and organisations who do exceptional work.
- Identify evidence-based best practice and raise its visibility across the profession for others to learn from.
- Provide an opportunity for the profession to celebrate the impact it has on individuals, the economy and society.
- Raise the profile of career development with key stakeholders, the media and the public.

The overarching criteria for awards are that they:

- Must have had an **impact** for the end client – directly or indirectly.
- Should be applicable to others from across the profession **to learn from**.
- Are supported by a level of **evidence**.

# Why have we changed the awards?

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We recognise the need to keep adapting the awards to reflect changes in the profession and to address improvements in the processes that support them. With this review we have taken the opportunity to:

- **Update the award categories** to make them broader and inclusive of all areas of practice.
- Make the **entry form easier to complete** and build in checks.
  - The entry form is now online and word limits are built into the form, so all entrants know they are meeting the word limit criteria.
- **Simplify the judging process.**
  - We have removed the Board shortlisting step and will now hold one round of judging to select the shortlist and winner for each category.
  - We are removing entrant names and organisations from entry forms before they are sent to the judging panels.
- **Raise the profile** of the shortlisted entrants and the awards themselves.
  - We are adding greater promotion activity for the shortlisted candidates and winners before, at and after the awards ceremony.
  - We are developing media engagement around the awards to showcase the best of the profession to the profession and wider public.

# How the awards work

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- All entries need to be made via the online form by the deadline.
- The form includes basic instructions and limits word counts. Detailed instructions are available in the Notes for Entrants document.
- The person or organisation being nominated needs to be a CDI member.
- If you are self-nominating, you will need a secondary nominee to support your entry.
- You can enter each category only once for the year, and if you enter more than one category it needs to be for a substantially different activity. If you enter multiple categories with activity that is considered too similar, the organisers will choose which category it best relates to and only consider the entry for that category.
- The judges will only consider the evidence included on the entry forms when judging entries.
- Names and organisations will be removed from entries before they are sent to judging panels.
- Judging panels will comprise a mixture of CDI Board and Ethics and Professional Standards Committee members, award sponsors, CDI nations and regional representatives and experts.
- Judging panels will decide a shortlist of up to three entries and a winner for each award.
- The judges reserve the right not to shortlist any entries if they do not feel they meet the required standard.
- Shortlisted entrants will be informed once judging closes and will be invited to attend the awards ceremony.
- The winner for each category will be announced at the awards ceremony and presented with their trophy.

# Changes to the award categories

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We have made changes to the award categories to;

- Recognise work from all areas of the profession, without having too many specific awards.
- Encourage more high-quality entries for each award category.
- Make the awards relevant to career development organisations as well as individuals and activities.

The Rodney Cox Lifetime Achievement Award remains as it has been – an award decided by the CDI Board in recognition of an individual who has made a significant impact in career development over their career. Entries are not accepted for this award.

CDI Fellowships will continue to be awarded by a panel from the Ethics and Professional Standards Committee under a separate process.

# The new award categories

## Careers programme - education settings

- Recognising outstanding careers programmes in any education setting for clients of any age, including primary, secondary and special schools, PRUs, colleges and sixth-forms, universities and training providers. The award recognises programmes that achieve an impact for clients in any area of career development, from careers education including work-based learning, to information, advice and guidance programmes.

## Careers programme – non-education settings

- Recognising outstanding careers programmes that are delivered outside formal education settings, such as within employers, by charities in the community, in prisons or with ex-offenders. Programmes are recognised for impact for clients with any aspect of career development.

## Career development professional working in education settings

- Recognising an individual who has made an outstanding contribution over the past year to clients of any age in an education setting such as primary, secondary and special schools, Pupil Referral Units, colleges and sixth-forms, universities and training providers.

## Career development professional working in non-education settings

- Recognising an individual who has made an outstanding contribution over the past year to clients of any age outside formal education settings, such as within employers, the voluntary sector, in prisons and in other settings.

## Careers provider of the year

- Recognising outstanding organisations providing career development services whether for young people or adults. The award recognises the organisation's commitment to professionalism, continuous development of their team, and adherence to the Code of Ethics to offer clients high quality, impartial and expert careers support. Organisations can be of any size and need to demonstrate the impact of their approach on their delivery for clients.

## Innovative product, resource or technology

- Recognising excellent new products, resources and technologies that have had an impact in the past year – whether in work with clients, supporting practitioners or advancing the profession more generally. The award is for new innovations, rather than existing and ongoing services, and is open to individuals and organisations.

## Contribution to the development of the profession

- Recognising an individual, team or organisation that has made an outstanding contribution to the profession over the past year, whether through delivery of a careers programme or activity, undertaking a piece of research, delivering outstanding training, professional development or other impactful activity.

## Rodney Cox lifetime achievement award

- An award decided by the CDI Board in recognition of those who have made a significant impact in career development over their lifetime.

# What about the old awards?

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We know that some of the previous awards were popular and these will be integrated into other activities.

For example, the Careers Leader of the Year award will be selected separately as part of the National Careers Leaders' Conference and will be awarded to the winner there. This allows us to recognise the winner of the award at the event which relates directly to the work of those entering.

Careers Leaders can still enter for awards within the new categories – for their programmes, their own impact and for any innovative products, resources or technologies they develop.

For 2026, we will explore adding an award for research to the National Research Conference. Again, anyone completing outstanding research can still enter through one of the relevant new categories.

# What can I expect as an entrant?

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Once the judging panels have concluded (around the end of March), we will inform you whether your entry has been shortlisted.

If you have been shortlisted you will;

- Receive the 'UKCDA Shortlist 2025' logo to add to your email signature and social media.
- We would encourage you to posts about being shortlisted and link to the awards page.
- You will be invited to the UKCDA awards ceremony and will receive one free ticket.
- We will be in touch to gather additional information and possibly to film a short video to support your entry. This may be shown on social media and at the awards ceremony.
- We may ask if you would like to be involved in other activity to raise the profile of the awards and your shortlisting, such as talking to awards sponsors or being part of media publicity.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> June, you and your guests can join us for the UKCDA ceremony, being held at the Royal National Hotel in London.

The ceremony will include dinner and we are developing an exciting theme for the evening, with greater focus on the shortlisted entrants and winners for each category, such as by;

- Sharing videos of the shortlisted entrants' work.
- Allowing more time for winners to give a short speech.





The UKCDAs are a fantastic way to recognise the outstanding achievements of yourselves and colleagues.

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We wish everyone the best of luck with their entries.