

Academy Quality Level Process 2025-2026: Model and Distinguished Academy Thresholds



NAF’s Quality Level Process is used to measure an academy’s implementation of NAF’s design. An academy’s quality level for the school year is calculated from annual data collection, NAF’s Academy Assessment scores and supporting evidence, threshold criteria, and Quality Review performance.

Quality Levels

Level	Score Range	Thresholds Required	Quality Review
Under Review	1-14.99 Overall	No	No
Member	15-19.99 Overall	No	No
Certified	20-24.99 Overall	No	No
Model	25-30 Overall and 20+ in all Elements	Yes	No
Distinguished	25-30 Overall and 20+ in all Elements	Yes	Yes

Thresholds for Model or Distinguished Level

To be considered for Model or Distinguished level, academies must meet designated thresholds for each of NAF’s four elements. Academies must meet these thresholds each year to maintain a previously earned quality level.

Element	Threshold Requirements
Academy Development & Structure	MODEL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Enrolls at least 20 students per grade level.
	DISTINGUISHED Meets at least one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Enrolls 200 (4-year program), 150 (3-year program), or 100 (2-year program) students in a single NAF academy with at least 20 students per grade level. ✓ Enrolls 20% of school enrollment in one or more NAF academies and the academy enrolls at least 20 students per grade level. ✓ Enrolls 80% of school enrollment in one or more NAF academies and the academy enrolls at least 10 students per grade level.
Advisory Board	MODEL and DISTINGUISHED Advisory Board meets both of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Includes at least ten (10) members. ✓ Includes at least 80% business, industry, government, alumni, community, and postsecondary education leaders OR the academy pathway is within the <i>Education Career Cluster</i>.
Program of Study (Curriculum & Instruction)	MODEL and DISTINGUISHED The academy offers a career-connected program of study consisting of a sequence of courses within one of NAF’s Future Ready Learning career pathways or aligned with the US Department of Education’s 14 career clusters and associated pathways .

Element	Threshold Requirements (continued)
	<p>A percentage of academy's seniors from the previous school year had a career preparation activity (i.e., internships, clinical experiences, youth apprenticeships/apprenticeships, and mentored industry projects, etc.) that met NAFTrack Certification requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 15% or more required for MODEL ✓ 25% or more required for DISTINGUISHED
Work-Based Learning	<p>-or-</p> <p>A percentage of academy's seniors from the previous school year had 2+ WBL activities entered in NAF's WBL Participation Tracker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 25% or more required for MODEL ✓ 35% or more required for DISTINGUISHED <p><i>Note: Activities must be from 2+ WBL categories (awareness, exploration, preparation); internships count toward the percentage</i></p>

NOTE: An academy must have graduated at least 10 students from the prior school year to be eligible for a Model or Distinguished quality level. Thresholds calculated from less than 10 graduates will not be considered.

Quality Reviews

To be considered for a **Distinguished** quality level, academies must participate in a Quality Review to be evaluated on criteria outlined in the Quality Review Observation Checklist. Only academies that meet Academy Assessment score requirements and Distinguished Thresholds will be invited to participate in a Quality Review. The academy's score on the checklist determines its final quality level for the school year. If an academy has previously participated in a Quality Review, NAF will examine prior reports, current academy data, and consult the academy's portfolio manager to determine if additional documentation or a full Quality Review is required to move to or maintain a Distinguished quality level.

Quality Review Observation Checklist Scoring

- 48-50 points = Distinguished
- < 48 points = Model

A Quality Review is no longer a requirement for **Model** level. Academy Assessment scores, supporting evidence and thresholds will be used to evaluate academies eligible for Model.