

## BTEC Parents' Guide

# Guide your child in the right direction

## Did you know?

- **42% of 18 to 30 year olds** believe they took the wrong educational path and say their **parents** were one of the groups that **influenced** them.

Source: Edge Foundation: November 2007

- In **2006/07**, more than **one million** students enrolled on a **BTEC course** in the UK alone.



## Guide your child in the right direction

Parents play a major role in guiding young students' choices when they leave school.

A survey conducted in 2007 by Edge, the educational foundation promoting practical and vocational learning, shows that a significant number of parents urge their child to do A levels and go to university.

GCSEs and A levels need not be the only education route that leads to university or a successful career. A BTEC course offers applied learning related to work which may be best for your child's learning and development.

This guide has been produced to provide you with the information you need on BTEC qualifications.

### What is a BTEC?

BTECs are work related qualifications suitable for a wide range of students, built to accommodate the needs of employers and allow progression to university. They provide a more practical, real-world approach to learning alongside a key theoretical background. They can be taken as well as, or in place of, GCSEs and A levels in schools and colleges. BTECs are recognised by schools, colleges, universities, employers and professional bodies across the United Kingdom and in over 100 countries worldwide.

BTECs have been around for 25 years, their reputation is second to none and they continue to grow and develop. In 2007, more than one million students enrolled on a BTEC course.

### Where are BTECs delivered?

BTECs are delivered through schools, colleges, independent training providers and employers. They are popular qualifications amongst young people and adult students alike. BTECs are flexible, enabling students to study them full-time or part-time, as part of an Apprenticeship programme or alongside work commitments and other qualifications.

### How are BTECs assessed?

BTECs are not exam-based qualifications. Exams work well for some students but others find them rather daunting and struggle to see how they fit into the real world of work.

Instead, students study real-life, work-based case studies and complete projects and assessments, which contribute to achieving each unit studied.

Each BTEC is made up of units. The number of units is dependent on the level and size of BTEC being studied (eg BTEC Introductory, BTEC National).

In order to complete each unit, students must achieve against a set of outcomes. The assessment criteria address theory with practical exercises. The assessment process is ongoing, so it allows the student to analyse and improve their own performance through their course in much the same way as they would in a real workplace.

The projects that students undertake form the basis of their unit results which are graded as a Pass, a Merit or a Distinction.

## Which BTEC is suitable?

BTECs are available at various levels:

**BTEC Entry** develops the initial skills for either a broad work sector or everyday life where confidence is needed by students. BTEC Entry Certificates are suitable for any student aged 14 upwards and are designed for students with learning difficulties or those who struggle with traditional learning.

**BTEC Introductory** qualifications are at Level 1 and offer an entry point to an industry sector and encourage the development of personal and work-related skills. The BTEC Introductory qualifications are suitable for any student aged 14 upwards and are designed for those who are not able to achieve A\*- C grade GCSEs, but who are motivated by a work-related course.

**BTEC Firsts** are Level 2 qualifications which are the equivalent of traditional GCSEs grades A\*- C. In 2007, there was a 50% increase in BTEC uptake across schools in the UK. There are currently over 60 BTEC First qualifications available, linked to industry sectors. The BTEC First is suitable for students aged pre-16 and is designed for those who are capable of achieving A\*- C grade GCSEs, but wish to focus on a work related vocational qualification or work area. Students may take BTEC Firsts alongside core GCSE subjects such as English, Maths and Science.

**BTEC Nationals** are designed as specialist qualifications for students who have a clear view of their future career or are seeking progression to higher education. BTEC Nationals are equivalent to A levels and are highly valued by universities, further education colleges and employers alike. There are more than 250 qualifications for students to choose from. These qualifications are suitable for students aged 16 upwards and are recommended for those who have achieved at least four A\*- C grade GCSEs or have completed a BTEC First and have a clear view of where they want to be, or wish to go to university.

**BTEC HNDs and HNCs** – The BTEC Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) are Level 5 higher education qualifications, widely recognised by universities and professional bodies. There are more than 150 qualifications available, suitable for students aged 16 and above. The HNC is often studied part-time alongside full-time employment. A Higher National student will develop management and other higher level technical skills required by employers. After a period of usually two years, students often progress to the final year of degree programmes. Higher Nationals can be studied in both FE colleges and universities.

## Other BTEC qualifications

**BTEC Development and Professional Development Qualifications** are a range of BTEC short course qualifications at all levels from 1-7. Each focuses upon the understanding, skills and knowledge needed for a sector, area of expertise or professional development.

**BTEC Foundation Diploma in Art and Design** is a Level 3 programme, lasting normally a year, during which individuals are prepared for entry to higher education to study art and design.

**BTEC WorkSkills** is a suite of units developed in response to the demand for employable people. These units build on the skills already taught in schools and colleges, recognising them with a formal BTEC qualification. WorkSkills encompasses work placement, interview skills, teamwork and vocational skills. It also helps people acquire the soft skills that employers are looking for; adaptability, a positive 'can do' attitude, and communication and presentation skills. There are over 30 skills-based units in total.

Students taking existing BTECs, GCSEs, GCEs, Diplomas and other recognised courses can fit WorkSkills into their timetable, adding a further work-based qualification to their CV.

### A parent's view on BTEC

**"I'm extremely proud of Matt's achievements; he's got a great job and he's very happy so I don't think either his mother or I would have wanted to change the route he took to getting where he is today"**

John is the father of Matt Lazenby, a student who left school following his GCSEs and undertook a BTEC in Art & Design at York College. Matt chose not to go on to university, despite achieving sufficient grades, and instead took up a job at a design company, which led to him co-founding design and branding agency LazenbyBrown with a friend in 2005.



## How long does a BTEC take to complete?

The time taken to complete a BTEC is dependent on the size and level of the qualification. A BTEC will generally take one to two years to complete depending on whether the student is studying full or part time. Schools, colleges and other BTEC centres determine the mode of study for the BTEC programmes they deliver. They are also responsible for ensuring that the students they accept to study a BTEC course are capable of achieving it, and for supporting them through their studies.

## What is the difference between a BTEC Award, Certificate and Diploma?

The different sizes of BTEC qualifications vary at each level; the smallest is an Award, the next size is a Certificate and the largest is a Diploma. The actual number of units and the amount of content within each is not fixed, but varies according to the design and focus of each qualification.

## Which industries does BTEC cover?

When developing its BTECs, Edexcel works very closely with employers from various industries and professional bodies to create qualifications that give students the skills they need to either move on to higher education or go straight into employment. For instance a BTEC National Certificate in Business would cover all aspects of business including marketing, law, human resources and accounting. Currently BTECs cover the following subject areas:

**Applied Sciences**

**Art and Design**

**Business, Management and Services**

**Children's Care, Learning and Development**

**Construction**

**Education and Training**

**Engineering**

**Hairdressing, Beauty and Related Therapies**

**Health, Care and Counselling**

**Hospitality**

**IT and Computing**

**Land and the Environment**

**Languages**

**Media**

**Performing Arts and Music**

**Public Services and Security**

**Sport, Leisure and Recreation**

**Travel, Tourism and Transport Services**

## A successful alternative to A levels

**"After getting 12 GCSEs (10 with A and A\* grades) I did a BTEC National Diploma for IT Practitioners. It was one of the best decisions I've ever made. I spent two years concentrating on a subject I really enjoy, and learning from a range of specialists. Since I earned UCAS points as I progressed through the course, I knew I had the grades for university. I applied to four and got four offers."**

Emyr Thomas opted for a work-related course rather than taking the traditional A level route. He chose this job-ready route because he believed it would be beneficial for university, giving him the upper hand on students who had followed the traditional A level route. Emyr is currently studying Computer Science at Cardiff University.



## BTEC Recognition

BTECs are understood and recognised by a large number of organisations in a wide range of sectors. BTEC qualifications are developed with key industry representatives and sector skills councils ensuring we meet employer and student needs.

Many industry and professional bodies offer successful BTEC students exemptions for their own accredited qualifications. A Recognition Directory is available from Edexcel to those seeking to qualify for professional memberships following the achievement of BTEC HNCs and HNDs.

For more information on professional recognition for BTECs, please contact our customer services team on 0844 576 0026.

For more information see  
[www.edexcel.org.uk/btec](http://www.edexcel.org.uk/btec)  
or call 0844 576 0026

## Progression

BTECs allow students to move on to higher education, to progress further in their career, to start their career in a certain industry or in some instances give them the skills to start their own business. They allow the student flexibility and choice in what they choose to do.

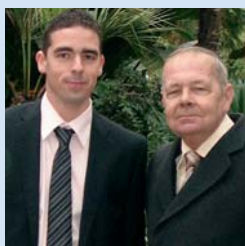
The table below shows all the educational progression routes available to BTEC students together with their more traditional equivalents:

NQF Level	Qualification title	Equivalent to	No of units/GLH	Overall grade	Progression	Availability	
						Pre-16	Post-16
5	BTEC Higher National Diploma	Foundation Degrees, Dip HE	16 units 960 GLH	N/A	Bachelors Degree, employment		✓
	BTEC Higher National Certificate	Intermediate level qualifications	10 units 600 GLH	N/A	BTEC HND, Bachelors Degree, employment		✓
3	BTEC National Diploma	3 GCE A levels (A*-C)	18 units 1080 GLH	✓	BTEC HND/HNC, Foundation Degree, Bachelors Degree, NVQ, employment		✓
	BTEC National Certificate	2 GCE A levels (A*-C)	12 units 720 GLH	✓	BTEC HND/HNC, Foundation Degree, Bachelors Degree, NVQ, employment		✓
	BTEC National Award	1 GCE A level (A*-C)	6 units 360 GLH	✓	BTEC HND/HNC, Foundation Degree, Bachelors Degree, NVQ, employment		✓
	BTEC Foundation Diploma in Art and Design	N/A	9 units 600 GLH	✓	Bachelors Degree (Art & Design), BTEC HND/HNC, NVQ, employment		✓
2	BTEC First Diploma	4 GCSEs (A*-C)	6 units 360 GLH	✓	BTEC National, NVQ, employment	✓	✓
	BTEC First Certificate	2 GCSEs (A*-C)	3 units 180 GLH	✓	BTEC National, NVQ, employment	✓	✓
1	BTEC Introductory Diploma	4 GCSEs (D-G)	360 GLH	✓	BTEC First, NVQ, employment	✓	✓
	BTEC Introductory Certificate	2 GCSEs (D-G)	180 GLH	✓	BTEC First, NVQ, employment	✓	✓
E	BTEC Entry Level Certificate in Life Skills	N/A	6 units 180 GLH	✓	BTEC Introductory, NVQ, employment	✓	✓
	BTEC Entry Level Certificate in Skills for Working Life	N/A	6 units 180 GLH	✓	BTEC Introductory, NVQ, employment	✓	✓

GLH = Guided Learning Hours

### BTEC Development and Professional Development Qualifications

There are BTEC short course qualifications at levels 1-7, leading to BTEC Diplomas, BTEC Certificates and BTEC Awards that are designed to accredit knowledge, skills and understanding for a specific area of work. These qualifications have variable sizes and progression routes and no formal equivalences.



### Progression to higher education and beyond

**"It is difficult to say at 16 where you want to spend your working life. A BTEC opens up avenues such as university whilst also being relevant to your profession. BTEC formed the basis of my engineering knowledge and proved to employers I had achieved an academic standard as well as practical skills."**

**Ben Hughes** completed a BTEC HNC in Mechanical Engineering and went on to complete a BEng degree in Mechanical Engineering in which he achieved first class honours. In 2007, he was offered and accepted a PhD position with the Engineering Physical Sciences Research Centre (EPSRC), one of the most prestigious PhDs in the profession. In 2007, he was also the recipient of a Whitworth Scholarship, presented by the Institute of Mechanical Engineers.

# Your questions answered

## Q. What does **BTEC** stand for?

**A.** Originally BTEC was an organisation – the Business and Technician Education Council – which was set up in 1983 to nationally validate and accredit high quality, consistent vocational qualifications. In 1996 following a merger of BTEC and the University of London Examinations and Assessment Council (London Examinations) a new company, Edexcel, was born. BTEC remains a brand for work-related qualifications owned and offered only by Edexcel.

## Q. How are **BTEC qualifications** developed?

**A.** Many BTEC qualifications are based on the National Occupational Standards (NOS), as determined by the relevant sector skills councils. From the NOS Edexcel creates units, assessment guidance and support materials within specifications. Edexcel consults widely with centres, employers, and other sector professionals. Where there is a perceived need for a specialist or other vocational qualification, Edexcel works with key players to create an appropriate BTEC qualification, accredited by our relevant regulators.

## Q. What are the **key features** of BTEC qualifications?

**A.** BTECs are work-related qualifications. The units are usually graded as *Pass, Merit or Distinction*, and many BTECs are given an overall grade using *Pass, Merit or Distinction*. Centres need to be approved by Edexcel to deliver BTEC qualifications and are required to have appropriately qualified and experienced staff and specialist facilities of an appropriate professional standard to enable students to benefit from their studies.

## Q. Why are some BTECs categorised as being **Technical Certificates**?

**A.** Sector skills councils have devised Sector Frameworks, which encompass National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs – occupational, competence-based qualifications) with Key Skills (for example, Numeracy, Communication and IT). The BTECs are then designated Technical Certificates (providing the underpinning knowledge).

## Q. How is a BTEC course **delivered**?

**A.** Approved BTEC centres are allowed to deliver their programmes as they wish – for example, as a day-release course, full time or via distance learning. They are able to create their own assessment, based on the specifications published by Edexcel. Centres are encouraged to work closely with local employers and to involve real life case studies where possible. It is important that there is relevance within BTEC programmes; students will benefit from and be stimulated by their BTEC courses being truly work-related. The mode of delivery and the course content may sometimes vary due to the input of employers in the area, and the local resources of a centre.

## Q. How does **assessment** take place?

**A.** BTEC qualifications are delivered and assessed by staff in centres, who create a programme of study to reflect local requirements and facilities, and who use a variety of assessment instruments appropriate to the outcomes being assessed. These may include, for example projects, presentations and case studies. Outcomes are measured using grading criteria, or *Pass, Merit or Distinction*. All assessment is quality assured through internal verification and sampled through a range of external verification activities orchestrated by Edexcel.

## Q. What does a student receive on **completion** of a BTEC course?

**A.** On successful completion of a BTEC course a student is provided with a certificate and a Notification of Performance. The certificate gives details of the student's name, where he/she studied and the name of the qualification (with the overall grade where this is provided). The Notification of Performance gives the titles of the units studied and the grades achieved in each – this is sometimes known as a student profile, and shows what a student has achieved on the course studied.

## Q. What are the **UCAS points** for BTECs?

**A.** Only BTEC National Awards, Certificates, Diplomas and the BTEC Foundation Diploma in Art and Design are eligible for UCAS tariff points.

A BTEC National Diploma has equivalence with three GCE A levels, 120-360 points

A BTEC National Certificate has equivalence with two GCE A levels, 80-240 points

A BTEC National Award has the equivalence with one GCE A level (or 2 AS levels), 40-120 points

A BTEC Foundation Diploma in Art and Design has the equivalence of 165-285 points

The number of UCAS points depends on the overall grade achieved. For example a BTEC National Certificate achieved at the overall grades of Distinction/Merit would be equivalent to 200 UCAS points. Details of the UCAS points for both GCE A levels and BTEC Nationals can be seen here: [www.edexcel.org.uk/ucas](http://www.edexcel.org.uk/ucas)

## Progression - UCAS points

Learners completing the following qualifications can apply for university places through UCAS - the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service - as these qualifications attract UCAS points. Further information about UCAS can be accessed via their website: [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com). This table shows the UCAS tariff points for GCE A and AS Levels, Edexcel Level 3 BTEC Nationals, the Edexcel Level 3 BTEC Foundation Diploma in Art and Design, and Key Skills qualifications.

A BTEC National Award has the equivalence to 1 GCE A Level (or two AS Levels), a BTEC National Certificate to 2 GCE A levels and a BTEC National Diploma to 3 GCE A Levels. Where, for example, a learner has achieved an overall grade profile of 3 Merits - MMM - in a BTEC National Diploma this provides a learner with 3 A Level equivalence and 240 UCAS points. A learner who is awarded the overall grade of Distinction in the BTEC Foundation Diploma in Art and Design will have 285 points on the UCAS tariff.

NB. Learners who successfully complete the BTEC National Certificate or Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development earn in addition between 40 and 120 UCAS points for the "Reflecting on and Developing Practice for Children aged 0-8" unit, and are recognised as qualified practitioners, *able to work* in a supervisory capacity in any childcare setting. This also enables progression to relevant higher education and teacher training.

GCE Qualifications (including vocational subjects)			BTEC Nationals			Points	BTEC Foundation Diploma in Art and Design)	Key Skills
AS	A level	Double Award	Award	Certificate	Diploma			
					DDD	360		
					DDM	320		
						285	Distinction	
					DMM	280		
		AA		DD	MMM	240		
						225	Merit	
		AB				220		
		BB		DM	MMP	200		
		BC				180		
						165	Pass	
		CC		MM	MPP	160		
		CD				140		
	A	DD	D	MP	PPP	120		
	B	DE				100		
	C	EE	M	PP		80		
A	D					60		
B						50		
C	E		P			40		
D						30		Level 4
E						20		Level 3
						10		Level 2

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