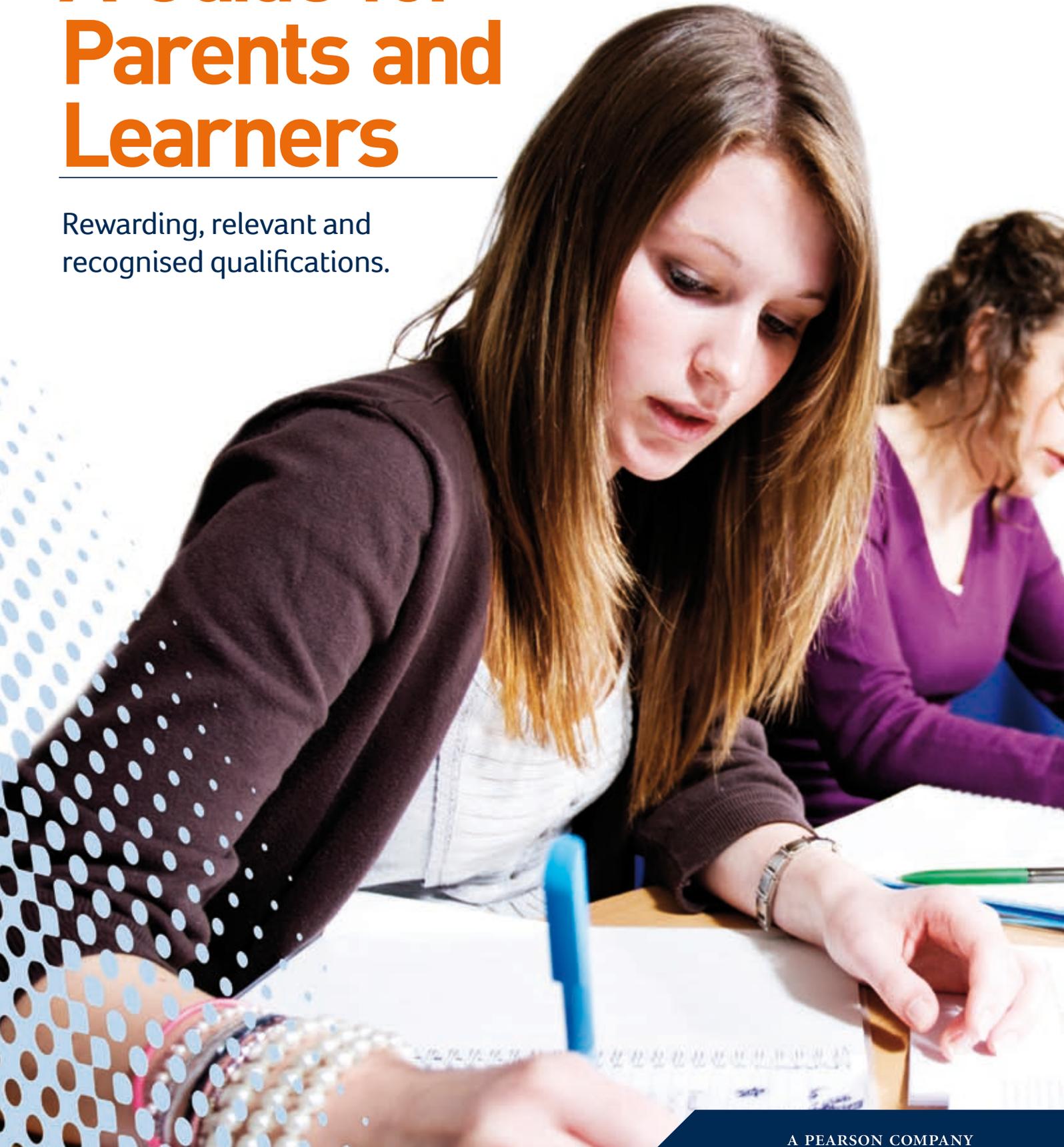


# A Guide for Parents and Learners

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Rewarding, relevant and  
recognised qualifications.





# Introducing BTEC

Over the last 25 years, BTEC qualifications have helped millions of people develop the skills they need to get on in life. Engaging and inspiring, these work-related qualifications are suitable for a wide range of ages and abilities. They provide a practical, real-world approach to learning without sacrificing any of the essential subject theory.

BTECs give students the skills they need to either move on to higher education or go straight into employment. For instance a BTEC Level 3 National in Business would cover all aspects of business including marketing, law, human resources and accounting. In addition, they also cover real-life activities such as writing and presenting a business plan.

BTEC qualifications can be taken as well as, or in place of, GCSEs and A levels and alongside Diplomas in schools and colleges. They are valued by colleges, universities, employers and professional bodies across the United Kingdom and recognised throughout over 80 countries worldwide.

# BTECs – the big benefits

## A practical approach to study

BTECs offer a practical, hands-on approach that can be lacking in more traditional routes. Students have to undertake a number of units for which they present evidence, based on actual work and studies. This allows them to demonstrate their skill and knowledge.

## Continuous assessment

When studying the BTEC way, progress is measured throughout their course, allowing the student to gauge their own performance on a continuing basis, just like in a real workplace. Students are more engaged and motivated as a result, as they can see their own progress through the course rather than waiting to the end to sit an exam. For many learners, the BTEC route with all work assessed through the year and no final exams could be the better option.

## Keep your options open

If you are not familiar with all of the many options available to school-leavers, like further education, Apprenticeships and jobs that offer workplace learning and vocational degrees, you are not alone. Few parents are aware of the many options available. By all means seek advice from the school or college. BTECs offer students a full progression route from Entry level through to Level 5 Higher Nationals.

## Inspiring confidence

Learning should be fun, not daunting. In our experience, students enjoy BTEC programmes because they can specialise in areas of learning linked with work that they are interested in, like sport or the music business. Courses tap into what they enjoy, feel good at and find familiar. Students build their confidence because they are developing skills that will help them secure a job or place in higher education in the future. Assignments may be in written form, but it's just as likely they will be in other formats, e.g. film clips, project proposals, business plans and structured databases. Students are always given clear guidelines so they know what they have to achieve and how to do this.

## Rewarding effort

Students will have to meet deadlines set by teachers but can do this at their own pace rather than having to perform to the time constraints of an exam. Progress is monitored individually by teachers who provide personal support and guidance, helping students develop their learning skills and to reach their potential. They get to learn progressively, starting from small-scale and simple topics, progressing to larger more complex themes.

## Working together

Teamwork is an important aspect in the world of work. Not surprisingly it is also a key feature of BTECs. Students work on assignments both individually and in groups, such as a group drama production or in a manager-employee role-play.

## Fitting study around other things

BTECs are flexible. They can be studied full-time or part-time. BTECs can be taken as part of an Apprenticeship programme or with other qualifications and alongside work commitments.

## Staying up to date

We are continually developing and updating BTECs in response to the needs and skills required by employers. This ensures that learners gain maximum benefit from their work whilst qualifying; and the qualifications stay up to date and relevant. Before deciding on a course to follow, it's worth considering whether the course has been revised recently and that the content is relevant; if it is a BTEC you can be assured that it has. All BTEC qualifications are now developed in co-operation with the relevant Sector Skills Council (SSC) ensuring they fit with the needs of employers.



**A million BTEC students each year**

In recent years, the popularity of BTECs has really taken off. In 2009/10, we received over 1.1 million BTEC registrations, and one in every two GCSE-level learners took a BTEC.

There has been a dramatic rise in popularity of BTECs in schools. We believe it's because teachers, parents and students have come to recognise and appreciate these two main factors:

**Firstly**, academic study doesn't suit every student. BTECs offer a challenging and rewarding learning experience leading to a useful qualification that's also well regarded and respected. BTECs are valued highly by employers and higher education.

**Secondly**, some students choose the BTEC route because they have already decided on a career path and want to make an early start. BTECs offer relevant and worthwhile experience, right from the word go.



You'll need to know how BTECs differ from other qualifications. Let's look at these differences and the advantages BTECs bring.



# BTECs in more detail

BTECs come in a number of different shapes and sizes, which can be confusing at first. So let's now take a look at the various options.

## BTEC Apprenticeships

Built on the core BTEC values of flexibility, employability, progression and quality, BTEC Apprenticeships focus on developing employability skill with fit-for-purpose qualifications developed in consultation with Sector Skills Councils. BTEC qualifications provide the knowledge components and are integrated within the package, meeting the government requirements, resulting in a seamless approach that eliminates duplication of learning and administration.

## BTEC as ASL

Many BTEC qualifications are approved by the relevant Sector Skills Councils as being appropriate Additional and Specialist Learning (ASL) components within the Diploma to complement the Principal Learning. ASL BTECs give learners the opportunity to deepen or broaden their studies by allowing them to choose qualifications they are interested in, and which are in line with their employment and educational progression goals.

## Foundation Learning

If a student is studying at Entry or Level 1, they will be able to choose from one of the BTEC qualifications within the Foundation Learning suite of qualifications focussing on the basic principles of working within a specific sector. For more information go to [www.edexcel.com/foundationlearning](http://www.edexcel.com/foundationlearning).

## What does a BTEC look like?

BTEC qualifications come in different levels, from BTEC Level 2 Firsts up to BTEC Level 5 Higher Nationals.

- Look inside a BTEC and you'll see it is made up of a number of units. This number is dependent on the level and size of BTEC being taken. To complete each unit, students' work is assessed along the way, pulling together skills, knowledge and understanding. This ongoing assessment allows students to analyse and improve their own performance through their course in much the same way as they would in the workplace.
- Unit results are graded as Pass/Merit/Distinction.
- The time taken to complete a BTEC is dependent on the size and level of the qualification. Many BTECs will generally take one to two years to complete depending on whether the student is studying full or part time, but some considerably less.

## BTEC Level 2 Firsts

Around 100 BTEC Level 2 First qualifications are available, each linked to an industry sector. Students may take BTEC Level 2 Firsts alongside core GCSE subjects such as English, maths and science. BTEC Level 2 Firsts come in three sizes: the Level 2 Diploma, Level 2 Extended Certificate and the Level 2 Certificate, and are available to learners aged 14 or over.

## BTEC Level 3 Nationals

BTEC Level 3 Nationals are designed as specialist, vocationally-related qualifications for those who have a clear view of their future career or want to progress to higher education. They are an alternative to A Levels and accepted as an entry requirement for universities and further education colleges, and highly valued by employers. There are around 300 qualifications for students to choose from. BTEC Level 3 Nationals 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 Level 2 First.

## BTEC Level 4/5 Higher Nationals

The BTEC Level 4 HNCs and BTEC Level 5 HNDs are widely recognised by universities and professional bodies. The HNC is often studied part-time alongside full-time employment and an HND is often studied full time.



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. BTEC Higher Nationals can be studied in both further education colleges and universities.

## The BTEC Foundation Diploma in Art and Design

This is a Level 3/4 programme, lasting normally a year, during which individuals are prepared for entry to higher education to study art and design.

## BTEC WorkSkills

The purpose of WorkSkills is to enhance employability and encourage students to gain soft skills to help them with career progression. Learners wishing to gain BTEC WorkSkills can choose from a range of unit options. Many units build on existing life and workplace skills, while some develop skills integral to the school and college timetable. For more information go to [www.edexcel.com/WorkSkills](http://www.edexcel.com/WorkSkills).

## BTEC Specialist Qualifications

These are a range of BTEC qualifications at all levels from 1-3. Each focuses upon the understanding, skills and knowledge needed for a particular sector or area of expertise. For more information go to [www.btec.co.uk/specialist](http://www.btec.co.uk/specialist).

## BTEC Professional Qualifications

These are designed to provide continuing professional development at Level 4 and above. For more information go to [www.btec.co.uk/professional](http://www.btec.co.uk/professional).

## And Finally...

The qualifications are fully recognised as holding equivalences to GCSEs. For example, a BTEC Level 2 First Diploma is worth the equivalent of 4 GCSEs grade A\*-C. A student can do a BTEC Level 2 First independently alongside GCSEs, or work towards them both in the same subject area.

## What sectors are available?

Currently BTECs cover the following sectors:

- Applied Science
- Art and Design
- Business, Administration and Support Services
- Children and Young People
- Construction
- Customer Service
- Engineering
- Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy
- Health and Social Care and Health Services
- Hospitality
- Information Technology
- Land-based and Environment
- Languages
- Media
- Performing Arts and Music
- Public and Uniformed Services
- Retail
- Sales
- Security
- Sports and Recreation
- Management and Team Leading
- Training and Education
- Transport and Logistics
- Travel and Tourism