

Main characteristics of course

These provide specialist work-related qualifications in a range of sectors. They are likely to provide practical, hands on experience of the skills and understanding needed to enter a specific area of employment.

Subjects you can study

There are over 50 different BTEC courses available at National Diploma level and a wide variety at first Diploma level too. Here are just some of them: animal care, drama, dance, beauty therapy, building services engineering, horticulture, performing arts, sport and exercise science, music technology, popular music, hospitality, leisure studies, early years, science, fashion, moving image, photography, multimedia.

Qualifications you need to enrol

For BTEC National Diploma you often require a merit from an intermediate GNVQ or BTEC First or at least four GCSE grades A-C. You may also be asked for portfolio, computer skills and to attend an interview.

For BTEC First diploma you require four GCSE passes at grades A-E. You will probably have to attend an interview or audition.

Length of course

Diploma = two years
First certificate = one year

Levels available

Level 3 Diploma course is same level as A levels.
The BTEC first certificate is a level 2 course.

Where you can study this

FE college	Many offered
School	Rarely offered

What can you progress to

From level 3 to university degree and HE courses. From level 2 to BTEC diploma or AVCE course.

Case study

BTEC National diploma in Multimedia. Study includes visual communication, 3D computer applications, digital video, design principles and programming. A course for creative types who are interested in design and new media.

BTEC

Main characteristics of course

These are single subject qualifications which extend the academic study after GCSE to a higher, advanced level.

Courses are assessed by a mixture of coursework and final examinations.

In year 12 you study AS courses and after exams you proceed to the next level, A2, in year 13.

Some pupils drop one subject after taking AS levels and concentrate on taking their best subjects through to full A level. School or college will advise how many subjects you study. Three or four at As level is usual.

Subjects available

There are about 100 subjects available at A level including subjects that you may have studied at GCSE level such as history, maths, English and biology. In addition there are a wide range of subjects which may be new to you such as psychology, photography, geology, government and politics, philosophy, law, economics and history of art. There are also A level courses in over 20 modern languages from Arabic to Urdu.

Pre entry qualifications

This will vary from one school or college to another but usually at least four or five grade A-C GCSE passes including English and maths to start a course of three As levels.

Length of course

Two years for A2 or one year for As.

Levels available

Advanced

Where you can study this

- **School** many courses will be offered
- **FE college** many courses will be offered

What can you progress to

- **Workplace training**
- **Employment**
- **Higher education:** Foundation degree, HND or full degree

Both AS and full A levels count towards your points for getting into university. Some courses will ask for specific subjects at A level so make sure you seek advice and do your research before you make your choices for year 12.

Case study

Pierre studied art, photography, history and English for As and A2 level. Although it was a lot of work he opted not to drop a subject at the end of year 12 because he wanted to keep his options open for the future and he enjoyed all 4 subjects equally. He gained grades ABBC and is currently studying for a one year foundation diploma in Art at FE college. Next year, he hopes to progress to a more specialised art degree at university.

A levels

Main characteristics of course

These qualifications are generally studied in the workplace or on release from work to attend college whilst in employment. NVQs reflect the skills needed to do a specific job effectively and the competences required are based on national occupational standards. To achieve the units of competence you have to show that you have reached a satisfactory standard in set practical tasks and provide evidence from your workplace of this. You get credit for both what you know and what you do. Assessment is by portfolio and a range of assessments including witness statements by your workplace trainer as proof of your competences.

Subjects you can study

There are hundreds of different NVQ courses. Each one relates to a specific job area rather than a whole career sector. Examples include customer service, carpentry, brickwork, hairdressing, early years, playwork, care, plumbing and accountancy.

Entry qualifications needed

NVQ are available at level 1, 2, 3 and 4. Entry qualifications vary from course to course. You need to be in paid or voluntary work in order that you can fulfil your workplace competences. Alternatively FE colleges offer some NVQ courses which include unpaid work experience in blocks of several weeks or there are apprenticeships which work towards NVQ qualifications. These are a useful bridge to employment and training for school leavers at 16+

Length of course

With workplace based NVQs there are no strict time limits on how long it takes you to complete each level of the NVQ. The college based learning part is usually one day or one evening per week.

Levels available

Level 1, 2, 3 or 4.

Where you can study this?

- School *increasing choices available*
- FE college *many offered*
- Workplace *many offered*

What can you progress to?

From level 3 NVQ go on to HND or university degree.
From level 2 NVQ go on to level 3 NVQ or BTEC diploma.

Case study

NVQ level 1 and 2 sport, leisure and recreation. This one year course is based at a gym helping with activities and coaching, dealing with health and safety and the needs of clients. Students spend one day per week on placement at a sports centre or primary school and half a day per week back at school or college updating their portfolio. In addition to their NVQ they may qualify for coaching awards and The Community Sports Leadership Award.

NVQ

National Vocational Qualification