

# NEON – ‘SUPPORTING BTEC STUDENTS’ WORKING GROUP

Alex Blower (Southern Universities Network), Chris Bayes (Lancaster University), Rebecca Foster (University of East Anglia) & Rebecca Sykes (University of Leeds)

HELOA Conference – 17<sup>th</sup> January



# INTRODUCTION & AGENDA

- What is NEON?
- Why we are focusing on 'Supporting BTEC students'
- The story so far – Work of the group to date
- Overview of our guiding principles for 'Supporting BTEC students'
- Discussing current initiatives to support BTEC students – Within your own institution and from across the sector
- Next steps and how you can get involved in the group



# INTRODUCTION TO NEON

- NEON is the National Educational Opportunities Network, the professional organisation supporting those involved in Widening Access to Higher Education.
- Established in 2011, NEON is a member-led organisation with members being largely drawn from English universities, but we also have members in Scotland and Wales, as well as members from the school and FE sectors, alongside a healthy number of third-sector organisations.
- We are all members of NEON's 'Supporting BTEC Students Working Group' - <https://www.educationopportunities.co.uk/programmes/working-groups/supporting-btec-students/>

## WHY BTEC STUDENTS?

# Number of BTEC students progressing to university

The number of students progressing to university with a BTEC increased from 13.3% in 2008 to **24.3% in 2015**



Today, around **1 in 4** students enter university having taken a BTEC National



Of those, around **two-thirds** have taken a BTEC on its own...



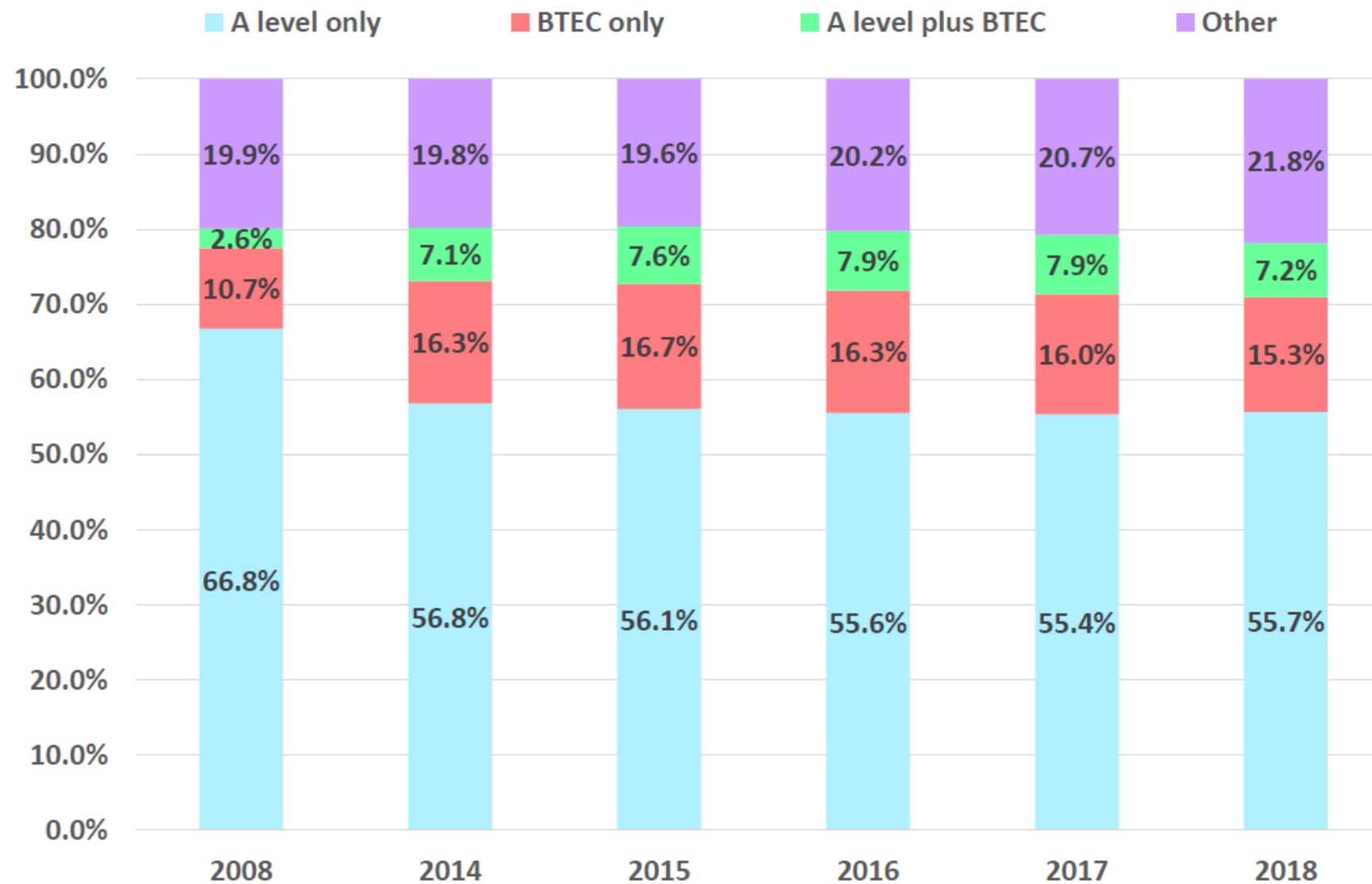
...while **one-third** have taken a BTEC alongside A levels



Each year, around **100,000 students** enter university with a BTEC National

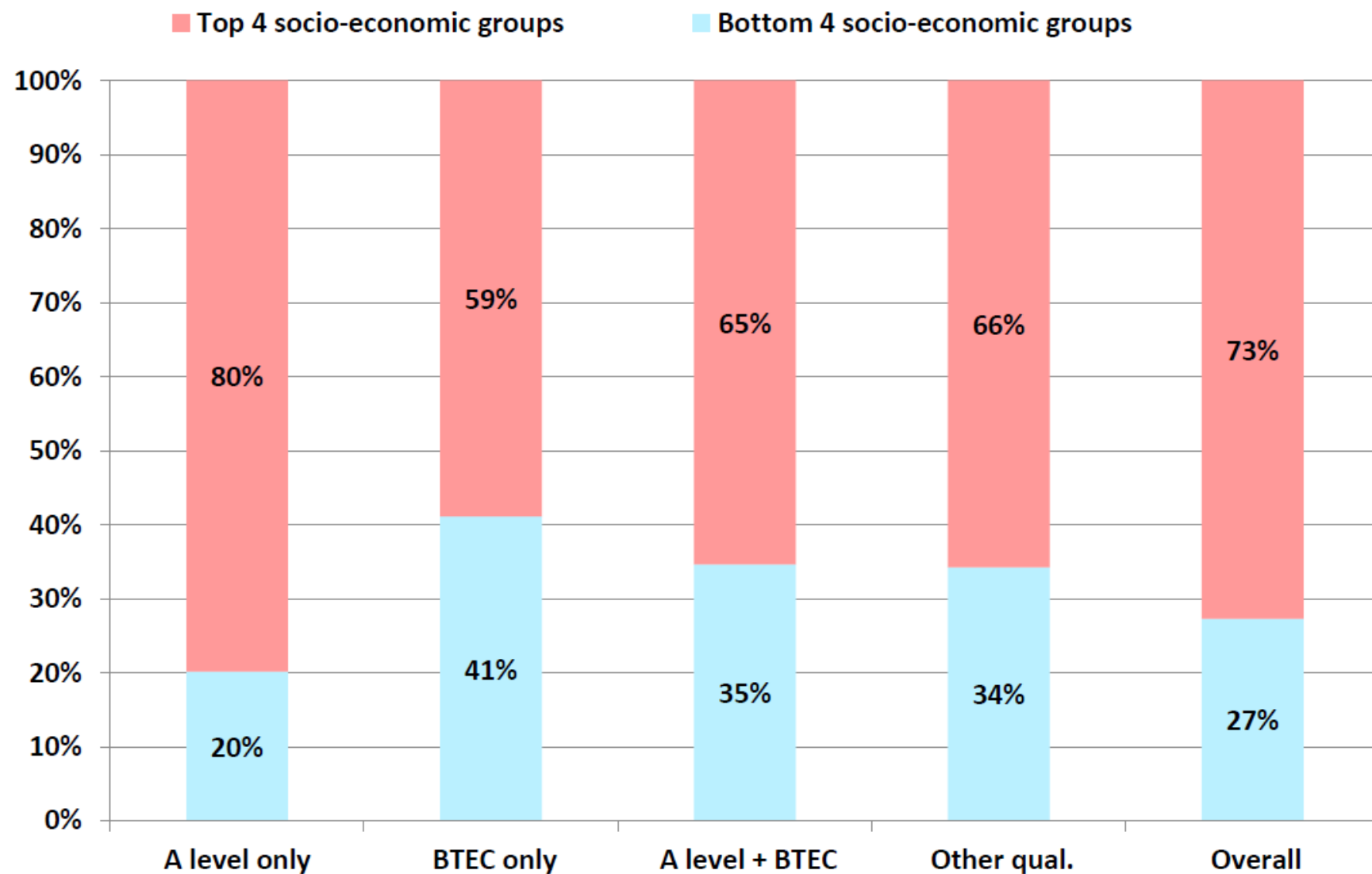


# Students by qualification type (UCAS data)





## Socio-economic group of 2015 entrants by qualification type (HESA data)



NEON'S 'SUPPORTING BTEC  
STUDENTS' WORKING GROUP  
- THE STORY SO FAR





# TIMELINE OF GROUP ACTIVITY TO DATE

September 2018 – Initial meeting in London  
– Input from around 30 HEIs

January 2019 – Second meeting at  
University of Suffolk – ToR established and  
decision made for Group to focus on two  
specific work streams

March 2019 – Sub groups established – Sub  
group one (IntoUniversity & University of  
Leeds) – Development of IAG resources to  
support learners and young people  
Sub group two (Lancaster University &  
NERUPI) – Mapping of activity to support  
BTEC students across Student Lifecycle



## PROGRESS OF GROUP TO DATE

- Working Group has formed two sub groups, **Sub Group One** looking at developing resources to provide clear and transparent IAG for BTEC students and their teachers. **Sub Group Two** looking at mapping existing support for BTEC students and understand what really works.
- We have put out two calls for details of provision supporting BTEC learners across the lifecycle to NEON members.
- Have begun to map details of these interventions onto the NERUPI Framework – Started by using Level 4 ‘Transition’
- Developed a set of sub headings for ‘guiding principles’ as follows:
  - Championing fair admissions practices for BTEC students - Alex
  - Conducting meaningful outreach activity with BTEC students in schools and colleges – Rebecca F
  - Supporting the transition and student success of BTEC students at university - Becca
  - Understanding the needs of BTEC students through engagement with research - Chris
  - Developing BTEC students for future employment via career readiness initiatives – Dr Mark Smith (Lincoln)

# **BTEC STUDENT ADMISSIONS**

Alex Blower

Further Education Project Leader: Southern Universities Network

PhD Student: University of Wolverhampton

# BTEC SNOBBERY?

**The Observer**  
Higher education

**Michael Savage**

Sun 28 Jan 2018 00.05 GMT



## Top universities accused of BTEc snobbery

**Poorer and ethnic minority students who take vocational qualifications are missing out on college places**



▲ 'BTEcs don't provide an appropriate preparation for most courses, where the emphasis is more academic than vocational,' says Cambridge University. Photograph: Peter Kindersley/Bloomberg via Getty Images

Top universities have been accused of “institutional snobbery” for failing to recognise vocational qualifications increasingly used by poorer teenagers as a route to higher education.

Almost half of white working-class and black British students in England are now reaching university with qualifications such as BTEcs, according to new research from the Social Market Foundation thinktank. However, some of Britain's most prestigious universities still fail to recognise the qualification. Campaigners warn that it creates a barrier to entry for disadvantaged students and acts as a brake on social mobility.

The UK's only independent  
devoted

Blog

Publications

Events

Lectures

## Higher education institutions could do more to help BTEC students, says new HEPI report

23 February 2017

In a new HEPI paper, [Reforming BTECs: Applied General qualifications as a route to higher education](#) (HEPI report 94), Dr Scott Kelly considers the rise in the number of university students holding BTECs.

Students arriving at university with BTECs account for much of the growth in students from the lowest participation neighbourhoods and other under-represented groups over the past decade. But those with BTECs face a 'glass ceiling' – for example:

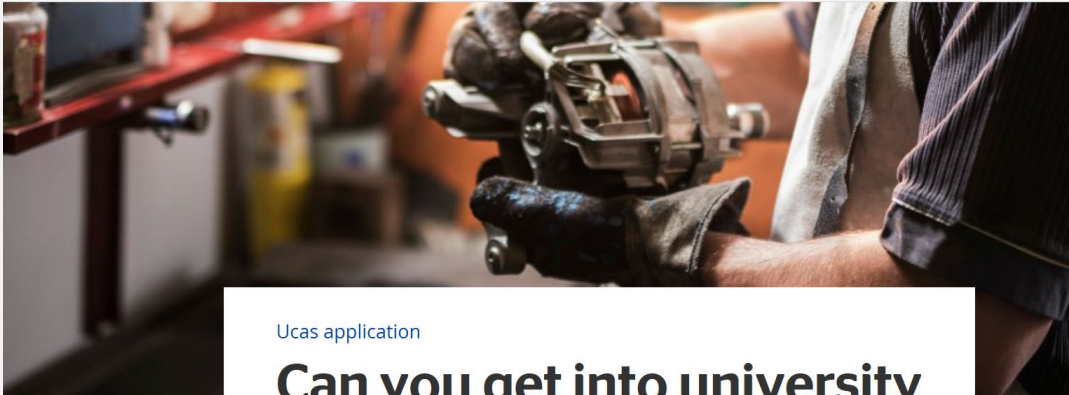
# THE CONTEXT

Which? University

Find a course ▾

Where to study ▾

Get advice ▾



Ucas application

## Can you get into university if you're studying BTECs?

By Higher Education  
Liaison Officers Association  
(HELOA)

26 June 2018

3 min read

*More than 100,000 BTEC students apply to UK universities each year, and BTEC HND students can progress directly into the final year of more than 70% of degree programmes.*

## Do all universities accept BTECs?

Ninety-five per cent of universities and colleges in the UK accept BTEC students, including competitive universities from the [Russell Group](#). In 2015, over a quarter of students accepted into higher education held at least one BTEC.

Nearly all universities accept BTECs in relevant subject areas, similar to how they would with equivalent A-level qualifications.

BTEC students can often be better prepared in terms of the independent studying that's required at degree level, due to the portfolio-based nature of BTEC courses. The time management and self-organisation you'll pick up on a BTEC course can also give you an added edge.

# INSTITUTIONAL APPROACHES TO BTEC

*Prospectus scoping exercise with 30 higher tariff institutions (Russell Group +6 more) covering the following areas:*

**Which qualification types are uniformly featured on course pages?**

**Are BTEC entry requirements featured on course pages?**

**Is a clear approach to admissions relating to BTEC qualifications described?**

**If I were studying a BTEC Extended Diploma would I be able to understand my eligibility to apply based on the information given in the prospectus?**

# THE FINDINGS

- Of the 30 prospectuses reviewed, **13** detailed a clear approach to admissions relating to BTEC applicants.
- Of the 30 prospectuses reviewed, **10** had BTEC qualifications uniformly featured on each of their course pages
- Of the 30 prospectuses reviewed, **10** held information regarding BTEC entry requirements which would be specific enough for students to understand their eligibility given the information available.
- Of the 24 RG prospectuses reviewed, **8** detailed a clear approach to admissions relating to BTEC applicants.
- Of the 24 RG prospectuses reviewed, **6** had BTEC qualifications uniformly featured on each of their course pages
- Of the 24 RG prospectuses reviewed, **8** held information regarding BTEC entry requirements which would be specific enough for students to understand their eligibility given the information available.

University of Birmingham
University of Bristol
University of Cambridge
Cardiff University
Durham University
University of Edinburgh
University of Exeter
University of Glasgow
Imperial College London
Kings College London
University of Leeds
University of Liverpool
London School of Economics and Political Science
University of Manchester
Newcastle University
University of Nottingham
University of Oxford
Queen Mary, University of London
Queen's University Belfast
University of Sheffield
University of Southampton
University College London
University of Warwick
University of York
University of Leicester
Loughborough University
Lancaster University
University of St Andrews
Royal Holloway, University of London
Aston University



# BY WAY OF COMPARISON...



***IB Entry Requirements  
were uniformly  
featured in 26 of the 30  
prospectuses***

The number of students applying to higher education with the IB has doubled in the last decade; in 2008 there were 1,035 acceptances, while in 2017 there were 2,190 acceptances – a figure that has remained pretty stable for the last few years.



# EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

## Manchester

COURSE	UCAS code	Course length	Typical entry requirements				Additional A-level, IB and GCSE/GCSE requirements Applicants must demonstrate a broad general education including acceptable levels of literacy and numeracy equivalent to at least grade C/4 in GCSE/GCSE English Language and Mathematics. English Literature will not be accepted in lieu of English Language.	English Language IELTS requirements Non UK applicants**	Page no.	
			A-level	A-level overseas/alternative UK	BTEC	IB**				
ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE										
Accounting [BSc]	N400	3	AAA	AAB	▶	35 points overall with 6,6,6 at HL	<b>IB:</b> students without GCSE/GCSE Maths at Grade A/7 and English Language at B/6 will need 6 in SL Maths and 5 in SL English Language A: English Language and Literature or Language A: Literature). If Language B: English is offered at SL, we would need you to achieve 6. We do not currently accept Maths Studies for BSc (Hons) Accounting applicants for the purposes of meeting our Maths subject requirements. <b>GCSE/GCSE:</b> to include Maths at Grade A/7 and English Language at Grade B/6.	6.5 with no less than 6.0 in any individual component.	55	
Accounting and Finance [BAEcon]	NN43	3	AAB	ABB	●	35 points overall with 6,6,6 at HL	<b>A-levels:</b> to include at least one of the following A-level subjects: Accounting, Anthropology, Business Studies, Classics, Economics, English Language/Literature, Further Maths, Geography, History, Law, Maths, Modern Languages, Philosophy, Politics, Psychology, Religious Studies, Sociology and World Development. <b>IB:</b> applicants offering Maths or Maths Studies at SL or HL must achieve a minimum of 5. Applicants taking English Language A must achieve 4 at HL or SL. Applicants offering English Language B must achieve 5 at HL and 6 at SL. <b>GCSE/GCSE:</b> to include Maths at Grade B/6.	6.5 with no less than 6.0 in any individual component.	55	
Accounting with Industrial/ Professional Experience [BSc]	N401	4	AAA	AAB	▶	35 points overall with 6,6,6 at HL	<b>IB:</b> students without GCSE/GCSE Maths at Grade A/7 and English Language at B/6 will need 6 in SL Maths and 5 in SL English Language A: English Language and Literature or Language A: Literature). If Language B: English is offered at SL, we would need you to achieve 6. We do not currently accept Maths Studies for the purposes of meeting our Maths subject requirements. <b>GCSE/GCSE:</b> to include Maths at Grade B/6.	6.5 with no less than 6.0 in any individual component.	55	
Economics and Finance [BAEcon]	N113	3	AAB	ABB	●	35 points overall with 6,6,6 at HL	<b>A-levels:</b> to include at least one of the following A-level subjects: Accounting, Anthropology, Business Studies, Classics, Economics, English Language/Literature, Further Maths, Geography, History, Law, Maths, Modern Languages, Philosophy, Politics, Psychology, Religious Studies, Sociology and World Development. <b>IB:</b> Applicants offering Maths or Maths Studies at SL or HL must achieve a minimum of 5. Applicants taking English Language A must achieve 4 at HL or SL. Applicants offering English Language B must achieve 5 at HL and 6 at SL. <b>GCSE/GCSE:</b> to include Maths at Grade B/6.	6.5 with no less than 6.0 in any individual component.	55	
Finance [BAEcon]	N300	3	AAB	ABB	●	35 points overall with 6,6,6 at HL	<b>IB:</b> Applicants offering Maths or Maths Studies at SL or HL must achieve a minimum of 5. Applicants taking English Language A must achieve 4 at HL or SL. Applicants offering English Language B must achieve 5 at HL and 6 at SL. <b>GCSE/GCSE:</b> to include Maths at Grade B/6.	6.5 with no less than 6.0 in any individual component.	55	

## Birmingham

Biochemistry with Professional Placement BSc	C102	4	AAA	0, 0, 0	■	✓	A level Chemistry and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C102
Biochemistry with Study in Continental Europe BSc	C101	4	AAB	0, 0, 0	■	✓	A level Chemistry and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C and grade 0/0 in a relevant foreign language (French, German or Spanish).	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C101
Biological Sciences (Genetics) BSc	C400	3	AAB	0, 0, 0	■		A level Biology/Human Biology and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C400
Biological Sciences (Zoology) BSc	C300	3	AAB	0, 0, 0	■		A level Biology/Human Biology and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C300
Biological Sciences BSc	C100	3	AAB	0, 0, 0	■		A level Biology/Human Biology and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C100
Biological Sciences BSc	C105	4	AAA	0, 0, 0	■		A level Biology/Human Biology and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C105
Biological Sciences with an International Year BSc	C001	4	AAA	0, 0, 0	■	✓	A level Biology/Human Biology and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C001
Biological Sciences with Professional Placement BSc	C102	4	AAA	0, 0, 0	■	✓	A level Biology/Human Biology and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C102
Biological Sciences with Study in Continental Europe BSc	C101	4	AAB	0, 0, 0	■	✓	A level Biology/Human Biology and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C and grade 0/0 in a relevant foreign language (French, German or Spanish).	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C101
Biochemical Materials Science BSc	B105	3	AAB	0, 0, 0	■		Two sciences required at A level, one of which has to be Biology or Chemistry	www.birmingham.ac.uk/B105
Biochemical Science BSc	B000	3	AAB	0, 0, 0	■		Two sciences required at A level, one of which has to be Biology or Chemistry	www.birmingham.ac.uk/B000
Business Management (Year in Industry) BSc	N001	4	AAB	0, 0, 0	●	✓	GCSE Mathematics and English at grade 0/0	www.birmingham.ac.uk/N001
Business Management BSc	N000	3	AAB	0, 0, 0	●		GCSE Mathematics and English at grade 0/0	www.birmingham.ac.uk/N000
Business Management with Communications and Year in Industry BSc	N101	4	AAB	0, 0, 0	●	✓	GCSE requirements are GCSE Maths and English at grade 0/0	www.birmingham.ac.uk/N101
Business Management with Communications BSc	N100	3	AAB	0, 0, 0	●		GCSE Mathematics and English at grade 0/0	www.birmingham.ac.uk/N100
BSc Business Management with Marketing and a Year in Industry BSc	N003	4	AAB	0, 0, 0	●	✓	GCSE requirements are GCSE Maths and English at grade 0/0	www.birmingham.ac.uk/N003
BSc Business Management with Marketing BSc	N002	3	AAB	0, 0, 0	●	✓	GCSE Mathematics and English at grade 0/0	www.birmingham.ac.uk/N002
Certificate in English Law	-	1					Applications are made through the University's International Office	www.birmingham.ac.uk/international
Chemical Engineering (International Study) MEng	H001	4	A*AA/AAA	7, 0, 0	■	✓	A level Mathematics and Chemistry required	www.birmingham.ac.uk/H001

● BTEC Extended Diploma considered (in relevant subject)    ■ BTEC only considered when combined with other qualifications    ◆ BTEC considered on a case-by-case basis    ✗ Not accepted    \* See course folder for details of subjects considered to be a science  
 Footnote: IB scores are for Higher Level subjects unless otherwise stated and we require 32 points overall in addition    In relation to GCSE reforms we can confirm our position in terms of equivalences: 9\*=8, 8=7, 7=6, 6=5, 5=4.  
 For more details, visit [www.birmingham.ac.uk/reforms](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/reforms)

## Liverpool

### Dentistry

At Liverpool we'll train you to be a working dental professional. Your learning will always benefit from being in context and applied. With 160 clinical dental chairs and a busy dental hospital on-site, we can offer you first-rate clinical training, complemented by innovative learning suites that feature interactive technology.

Download the full Dentistry brochure from [www.liverpool.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/publications/](http://www.liverpool.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/publications/)

### Programmes at-a-glance

	UCAS code	A level	BTEC (Level 3 National Extended Diploma)
Bachelor of Dental Surgery BDS 5 years	A200	AAA	Not accepted
Dental Hygiene and Dental Therapy BSc (Hons) 3 years	B750		
Foundation to Health and Veterinary Studies (Year 0) 1 year			
- Dentistry (Year 0) OAAW			
- Dental Therapy (Year 0) BAAW			

#### BTEC KEY

- ▶ BTECs considered (in relevant subject).
- BTECs only considered when combined with other qualifications such as A-levels.
- BTECs not accepted

# CONSIDERATIONS

**Why do higher tariff institutions take such an inconsistent approach to the inclusion of BTEC entry requirements?**

**How far are BTEC students likely to go to find out information that is not transparent and easily locatable?**

**Which questions should this group be asking, and to who, in order to instigate a more transparent approach to university admission processes for BTEC students?**

**Change is coming in vocational education (T-Levels). How do we ensure that similar mistakes aren't made?**

# CONDUCTING MEANINGFUL OUTREACH ACTIVITY WITH BTEC STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Rebecca Foster

## **ENGAGING BTEC PROVIDES IN IN-SCHOOL/COLLEGE ACTIVITY**

- Flexible Offer
- Value: Gatsby, Personal Development Plans, Not a competitor
- Evidence of working
- Understanding barriers: High staff turn over
- Specific presentations: Confidence, Sense of belonging
- Specific subjects: Business, Computer Science, Health Sciences and Sport

# ENGAGING BTEC LEANERS AND PROVIDERS IN EVENTS

## UEA BTEC specific events

- BTEC awards

## UEA Adapted events for BTEC learners

- Headstart and Preparing for University MOOC: Exams, Independent learning, Academic Writing, Maths, Referencing
- Futures 18: Adapting topics

**Language**

**Awareness**

**Accessibility**



## OTHERS BEST PRACTICE

- In School/College Study Skills support
- Support for tutors
- Mentoring/Ambassadors
- Online modules/library resources



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**



**SUPPORTING THE TRANSITION & STUDENT SUCCESS  
OF BTEC STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY**

**Becca Sykes – Educational Engagement  
Manager, University of Leeds**

## WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

- A sound understanding of UoL data on BTEC students;
- A good understanding of the issues that BTEC students face
- A complete understanding of research and best practice in the sector concerning support for BTEC students in HE and what is appropriate to roll out at UoL
- Faculties and Schools to understand the need and means to support BTEC students and their part in embedding support at the University
- Awareness raising to challenge myths and change perceptions regarding BTEC students
- Better monitor at risk students (including BTEC) regarding NC/attainment/progression and target tailored support
- BTEC students to feel supported during their transition to HE
- BTEC students to feel academically prepared for their transition to HE
- BTEC students to feel that they are welcome and belong at the UoL
- Improve the retention, attainment and progression rates for BTEC students.



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## HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE THIS?

- Pre-Entry Outreach
- Updating communications and materials to be inclusive
- Using Student Hosts as peer mentors on Outreach activity
- BTEC specific visits
- Webinars
- Development of an HE preparatory BTEC MOOC
- Knowledge transfer workshops
- Transition into Leeds – Summer 2020

## HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE THIS?

- On course Support
- Appointment of 8 Student Success Officers
- Continued conversations to raise the profile of BTEC with academics, HoS, Admissions, Marketing
- Changes to curriculum, modules or assessment
- Student focus groups
- Sense of Belonging Survey
- Signposting to appropriate support
  - Skills @ Library
  - Careers
- Regular meetings and Student Success forums with colleagues to share best practice

## UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF BTEC STUDENTS THROUGH ENGAGEMENT WITH RESEARCH

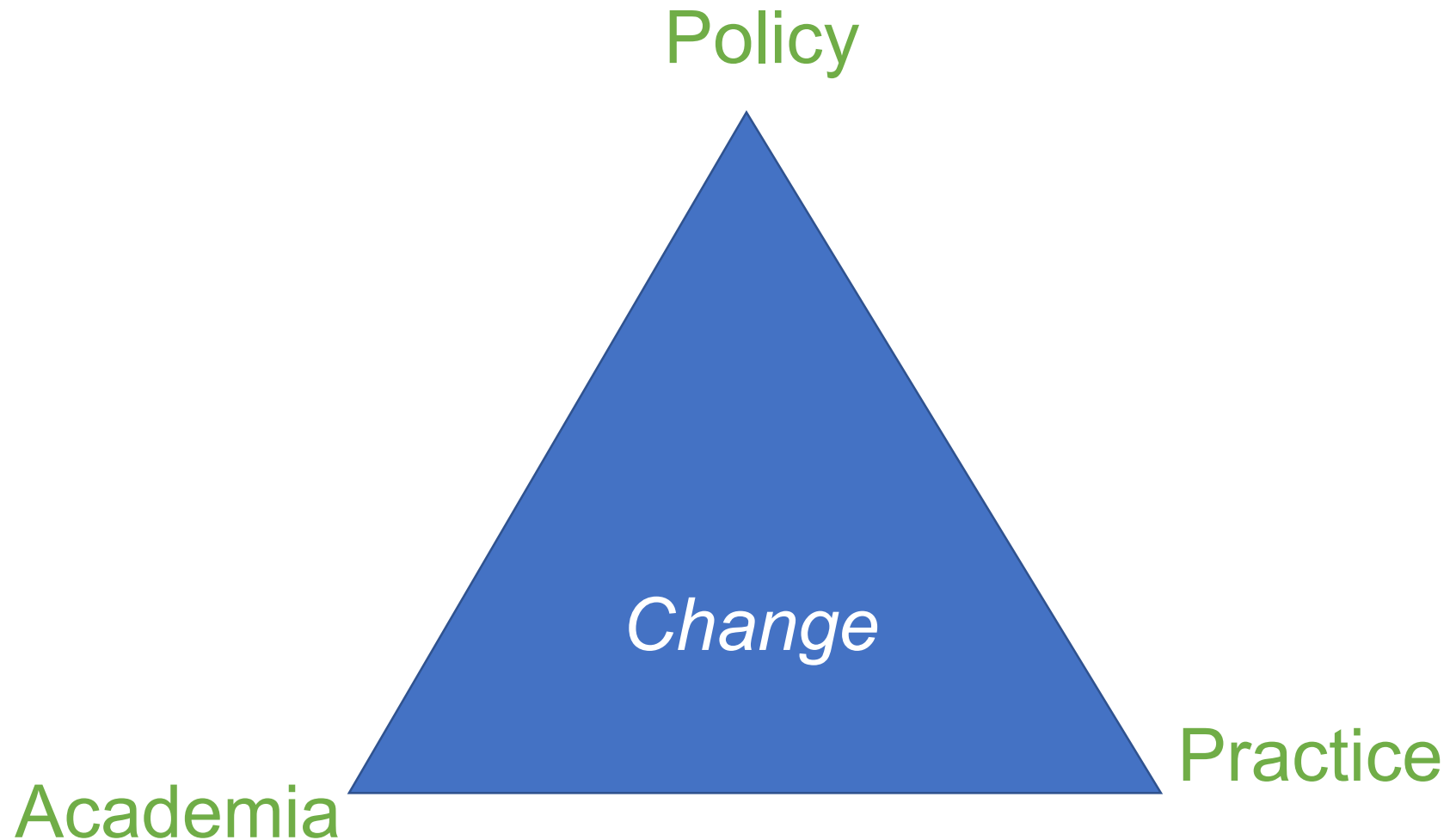
**Chris Bayes – Outreach & Student Success  
Manager, Lancaster University**

## CONNECTING RESEARCH & PRACTICE

- How many colleagues in the room have spent time reading research papers before planning a project?
- We have a major issue within the sector around the disconnect between policy, research and practice
- Why is this? What can be done about it?



# *Connecting Research and Practice in Widening Participation:*



## SUPPORTING BTEC STUDENTS

### Further reading

‘Transitions from Vocational Qualifications to Higher Education: Examining Inequalities’ – Banerjee & Mayhill – Based on findings from ‘Transforming Transitions’ project

Pearson - BTEC Students into Higher Education: Listening to Learners’ Voices report

Enhancing BTEC students’ transition to HE: developing pedagogical partnerships across post-16 and HE sectors – Dr Clare Gartland & Dr Christine Smith (University of Suffolk) – Report produced for NEACO – NCOP

Raven, N. 2018. ‘The higher education progression of BTEC learners: trends, challenges and tactics’ – In 2018 FACE publication

## WORKING ACROSS BOUNDARIES

### Further reading

Bayes. C. 'Blurred Boundaries – Encouraging greater dialogue between Student Recruitment and Widening Participation' - In 2019 FACE publication

Hudson, A. and C. Pooley (2006). *Support & Recognition For Widening Participation Practitioners*. London, Continuum.

Hudson. A – 'Widening Participation Practitioners Write! – In 2019 FACE publication

Stevenson, J., R. Tooth, A. Bennett and P. J. Burke (2018). "Writing together: practitioners, academics and policy makers." *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*. 20(3): 7-13.



SUPPORTING BTEC STUDENTS IN  
YOUR OWN INSTITUTION



## ON YOUR TABLES

- Discuss how your institution currently supports BTEC students and the following:
- Is this support taking place across the student lifecycle or is activity targeted at various touchpoints in the student journey?
  - Pre-arrival, Transition, Student Success or Graduate Outcomes
- Are activities targeted directly at BTEC learners or are BTEC students beneficiaries of activities targeted more broadly at ‘WP students’?



## QUESTIONS FOR YOU

- What are your thoughts on the work of the group to date? Are we covering things related to BTEC agenda which you'd expect? Is there anything we are missing?
- How can we work to ensure there is a two-way communication channel between the NEON Group & HELOA colleagues?
- How can we implement findings from the NEON Working Group across the sector?
- Is there anything else you would like the NEON Working Group to focus on?

## NEXT STEPS FOR THE GROUP

- Continue to have quarterly meetings – Next one at University of Leeds on **5<sup>th</sup> February** – <https://www.educationopportunities.co.uk/programmes/working-groups/supporting-btec-students/>
- Hope to continue to present our findings at NEON's Summer Symposium, FACE's national conference and associated events
- From speaking at various universities over the past few months, seems as though developing a digestible guide based on our 'guiding principles' would be of value to the sector

ANY QUESTIONS?

Email – [c.bayes@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:c.bayes@lancaster.ac.uk)