

Frequently Asked Questions on Level 2 BTEC First Certificate(FC) / Diploma (FD) in Applied Science

The following frequently asked questions and answers must be used in conjunction with related Edexcel and JCQ Code of Practice documentation.

Recruitment

1. What factors do I need to be take into consideration when recruiting learners to follow the BTEC First Applied Science qualifications?

BTEC First Applied Science is a Level 2 qualification designed for learners working towards GCSE grade A* - C.

Factors to consider prior to registering learners include:

- attainment identified at KS3, including levels of literacy and numeracy
- preferred learning and assessment styles
- personal qualities such as attendance, motivation.

2. Can I register learners in year 9?

There is no minimum starting age for BTEC qualifications that are permitted at Key Stage 4 and the commencement of programme is at the discretion of approved centres. We advise that a preparatory programme which should include familiarisation with assessment style and encourage good practice in learners is implemented with learners before year 10. For more guidance on registering year 9 learners, please see the Policy of age of Learner on a BTEC Programme <http://www.edexcel.com/Policies/Documents/Age-of-Learners.pdf>

3. My school is starting BTEC First Applied Science, does Edexcel provide leaflets explaining the course structure of BTEC Applied Science for learners and parents?

Yes, Edexcel provides leaflets designed for learners and a parent's guide which can be downloaded from the Edexcel website. *The BTEC learner and Parents guide can be downloaded from the BTEC First in Applied Science subject page of the website.*

Progression Pathways

4. What courses can the learners progress to at the end of Key Stage 4?

The qualification is based on the KS4 Programme of Study for Science and is equivalent to *two* GCSE grades A* - C (FC) and *four* GCSE grades A* - C (FD) which will count towards progression to other vocational courses such as the BTEC National Diploma in Applied Science and academic courses such as Advanced Level subjects i.e. GCE Applied Science.

For learners hoping to progress into any of the following qualifications: GCE Biology, GCE Chemistry or GCE Physics, the centres will need to provide enrichment in terms of mapping into the relevant GCE Advanced Subsidiary. 11 -16 schools should discuss progression options in more detail with local sixth forms and tertiary colleges.

Approval

5. Does my school need to gain centre approval from Edexcel prior to offering and starting the Qualification?

You need to get centre approval if your school does not run an existing BTEC qualification, this is an easy no fee process which can be done through Edexcel Online by either your head teacher or exam officer. For step by step guidance on centre/programme approval please see

section 15 in the EDEXCEL Information Manual 2009 - 2010 (publication code: Z021760). If you are not sure you have centre approval, please ask your exams officer to check Edexcel Online. To get help with Edexcel Online please call 0844 576 0026. (*Please see question 8 on Centre Risk Assessment*)

6. My school has centre approval, what is the next step?

Now that you have confirmed you have centre approval, you need to gain programme approval through Edexcel Online. For step by step guidance on centre/programme approval please see section 15 in the Edexcel Information Manual 2009 -2010 (publication code: Z021760). Please note that you will need to obtain separate approval for the First Certificate and the First Diploma (as they are two different programmes).

7. I have not received a confirmation email to say that I can run the programme, please help?

Confirmation emails are sent to your Edexcel Online Inbox, ask your exams officer to set up an Edexcel Online log- in for you so that you can have access to get important information such as reminder of key dates. For help with Edexcel Online, please call 0844 576 0024.

Centre Risk Assessment

8. Centre Risk Assessment - Why do I have to carry out this process?

The Centre Risk Assessment is an audit of quality assurance processes within your centre. This is a yearly process that all centres with active BTEC registrations are required to carry out. This may be undertaken by an appointed Edexcel Quality Manager during a visit or self assessment within the centre.

Centres new to BTEC will be supported by their Edexcel Regional Quality Manager, please see contact details for regional quality managers in the section on support.

For more information on centre risk assessment, please type in centre risk assessment into the '*I want to*' page of the BTEC Applied Science website.

Plagiarism and Learner Authentication Statement

9. Are learners required to sign an authentication statement to support submitted assignments are their own their own individual work?

All assignment briefs used within the centre must include this statement "I certify that the work submitted is my own" and the learner is required to sign and date the statement to authenticate evidence submitted.

10. Do learners have to reference sources of their work?

Any external sources included in a learner's work including websites have to be referenced. A relatively simple reference system is sufficient at this level. This is to prevent plagiarism.

11. Are teachers required to sign the assessment outcomes based on the evidence provided for individual assignments?

Yes, as set out in the JCQ Code of Practice teachers are required to authenticate the work submitted as that of the individual learner. Centres are advised of the need to ensure that learners understand the assessment and authentication process and that any breaches are managed within the centre's policy. External Verifiers are required to inform the Edexcel Compliance Unit of suspected cases of mal-practice

12. I am worried that learner work looks plagiarised, what should I do?

All evidence submitted by a learner must be their own work in order for it to be valid evidence against the assessment criteria. If you suspect plagiarism then you should not accept the work as meeting any of the criteria. The work should be returned to the learner with clear instructions that they need to provide evidence in their own words and reference their sources.

In a situation where the learner insists that work is their own then the centre's appeals procedure should be brought into action. If plagiarised work is assessed as meeting criteria then clearly this will not meet National Standards and the Edexcel Compliance unit will be informed as above.

Internal Verification

13. I have heard about Internal Verification (IV), what is it?

Internal verification is a process whereby a colleague in the centre checks that assignment briefs have been written to allow the learners to access the pass, merit and distinction assessment criteria (i.e. provides the learner the opportunity to present evidence to meet the criteria/criterion in the unit assessment grid) and that assessment decisions made are accurate. This ensures quality and rigour in the programme.

14. There is a box on the Edexcel assignment brief template for the IV comment, should the learner be able to see this?

The IV process is a recorded discussion between two professionals to support the assessor to ensure accuracy, consistency and quality of assessment and should not involve the learner. The IV box on the template can either be signed by the IV to show it has been internally verified with no further comment or be removed from the template. The comments should be a separate document that the learner should not be privy to (please see question below).

15. What document can I use for the IV process? Does Edexcel provide templates our centre can use?

If you are already running other BTEC programmes in your school, it is worth finding out what documents are being used with other BTEC programmes in your centre. These documents may be adapted to meet the requirements of BTEC FC and FD in Applied Science and can be found on the I want to 'quality assurance' page of the website.

Edexcel provides templates for the IV process:

- for internal verifying assignment briefs
- for internal verifying Assessment decisions.

16. Does the IV need to be a member of the science team or a colleague within the school with an assessment background?

No, ideally having a colleague with a Science background is preferable, however the IV needs to be someone who is able to understand the assessment criteria and evidence outcomes required. We offer training for Internal Verification, please see www.edexcel.com/training

17. Can I verify (IV) my own work?

No, even if you are a centre where there is only one assessor for BTEC Applied Science in your centre, you will need another colleague to IV your work to ensure that the assignment briefs are "fit for purpose" and that assessment decisions are accurate and consistent. Please see question above.

18. How many assignments do I need to IV?

All assignment briefs need to be internally verified before delivery to learners.

In addition centres must internally verify assessment decisions; a sample of assessed learner work for each assignment should be taken. The sample number depends on the number of learners in the centre, and the experience of each of the assessors.

The centre should carry out internal verification of sufficient samples of assessed work to be confident of the accuracy and consistency of assessment across all assessors on the programme. However 50% of the National Standards Sample must be Internally Verified (*For example cohort size 30 learners the NSS sample would be 4 and therefore at least 2 learners work must have been part of the IV sampling process with appropriate completed forms, please see the National Standards Sampling section below*)

19. Do I have to IV commercially published assignments or assignments from other schools that have gone through National Standards Sampling?

Yes, all assignments produced internally and externally must be internally verified even those that are published on the Edexcel website, this is to ensure that assignments are suitable for your learners.

20. Do I have to internally standardise my work as an assessor?

Yes, you need to standardise as set out in the JCQ Code of Practice. Examples of times when standardisation needs to be done are set out below

- If there is more than one assessor on the same unit
- More than one team/site
- New assessor
- Issues following external verification.

Standardisation ensures all teachers are assessing to the same standard. This is a different process from internal verification and involves all assessors coming to one assessment decision on the same assignment.

National Standards Sampling - external verification

21. What is National Standards Sampling (NSS)?

NSS is a process by which an external verifier (EV) checks that assignments briefs are fit for purpose, assessment decisions are correct and that internal verification is effective. At the end of a successful external verification process, centres will be able to claim certification for their learners, if applicable.

22. When will I be able to contact the External Verifier (EV)?

The External Verifier (EV) will contact the quality nominee in your centre (Quality Nominee is the named person responsible for all the BTEC qualifications in your centre) and so follow up contact can be made from January onwards.

23. Will the EV contact and offer any form of guidance and support for this programme?

Yes, during January you will be contacted by your EV to provide the assignment brief to be used for National Standards Sampling so that the EV's can review and provide feedback, prior to National Standards Sampling taking place.

For additional support you may send queries about delivery or specification content to the Science Advisor or BTEC Ask the Expert Service (please see details below).

24. When will NSS take place?

NSS takes place year on year and a centre will be asked to provide samples from different units year on year. NSS is carried out on a Programme Area Title (PAT) basis; this means that a sample is taken from across programmes of the same title at Level 2 or 3. However many schools only run Level 2 programmes and therefore in these centres it is only the BTEC First programmes that can be sampled. The number of samples of work required will depend on the number of registrations (please see table below).

External verifiers will provide guidance to centres on the number of units to be sampled and the number of samples required from each unit.

No of Learners Registered	Size of Sample from a Unit
1-3	All learners Sampled
4-100	4 Sampled
101- 250	8 Sampled
251 plus	12 Sampled

25. How many units do we need to submit for NSS?

The number of units you need to submit for NSS depends on the programme being run in your centre, please see table below for guidance.

Centres will need to review their teaching programme to ensure a different unit is available for the NSS samples each year.

Centre running First Certificate in Applied Science only or First Diploma in Applied Science only	Centre running First Certificate & First Diploma in Applied Science	Centre running First Certificate, First Diploma and Nationals	Centre running BTEC Nationals in Applied Science only
One assignment from one unit is sampled	One unit will be selected from either of the programmes and the sample size will be based on the total number of learners registered for the unit being sampled	A maximum of five units i.e. one unit from BTEC First and up to 4 units from BTEC Nationals	A maximum of Four units - this is usually 2 units from year 1 of a programme and 2 units from year 2 but if the programme is only running in one year then only 2 units would be sampled

Process chart of NSS process over 2 years showing exclusion of previous sampled unit rule

Centre 00000	
Academic year 2009-10	Academic year 2010-2011
1 November 2009, learners registered with Edexcel.	1 November 2010, learners registered with Edexcel.
December 09: EV allocated and contacts quality nominee.	December 10: EV allocated and contacts quality nominee.
January 2010: EV contacts centre to agree a unit from which the sample will be supplied. An assignment brief which shows the centres ability to assess across the range of assessment criteria (pass, merit and distinction where possible) is selected.	January 2011: EV contacts centre to agree a unit from which the sample will be provided. This must be a unit which was not sampled the previous year but can come from either First Certificate or Diploma if the centre is running both programmes.
By the agreed date which must be before April 30 2010, centre should have forwarded to EV photocopies of the requested sample of learner work and accompanying Internal Verification documentation, together with the NSS documentation.	By the agreed date, before April 30 2011, photocopies of the required sample of work together with Internal Verification documentation should be forwarded to the EV.

26. After I have sent my work for NSS to my EV, what happens next?

The EV will review the work within 10 working days of the agreed date for receipt of the sample and depending on a successful outcome, your centre is *released* and able to claim certification for appropriate learners.

In the event of the first sample failing to meet the required standard then a second sample is requested and your centre is blocked from certification.

The EV will provide written and verbal feedback which will include an action plan detailing what you will need to do before providing the second sample. It is crucial that you understand the action plan and carry out this remedial action. You will then provide a second sample of the same pieces of learner work by an agreed date which must allow external verification of the sample to take place before May 31st. If you have followed the action plan and successfully met National Standards, the centre will then be *released* to claim certification.

However if the accuracy of the assessment decisions is not agreed after the second sample then an Edexcel Quality Manager will contact the centre so that the quality of assessment may be resolved and therefore provide certification for appropriate learners.

27. Do I receive certificates automatically?

No, as indicated above the centre is required to claim certification following a successful NSS sample. Results can be returned via personalised student report forms which is sent to centre on initial registration of student or reported via EDI or Edexcel Online, this needs to be done by the date indicated in the Edexcel Information Manual see below.

Administration

28. How do I calculate the final award for a learner?

The tables below set out the link between the number of guided learning hours (GLH)per unit and the number of points for achieving the unit at pass, merit or distinction.

BTEC Applied FC and FD Science	Points for achieving a Pass grade for unit	Points for achieving a Merit grade for unit	Points for achieving a Distinction grade for unit
60 Guided Learning Hours	6	12	18

e.g. Learner X has completed all three units of BTEC First Certificate in Applied Science with results below:

In Unit 3, Chemistry Applications Merit Grade so 12 points

In Unit 4 Physical Science Applications Distinction Grade so 18 points

In Unit 5 Biological Systems Merit Grade so 12 points

In total the candidates gets 42 points and would gain a distinction grade for the qualification. The final grade is calculated using the table below which can be found on the Recording your achievement document on the website or page 117 in the current specification publication code (BF017257).

Qualification	Pass grade	Merit Grade	Distinction grade	Distinction * grade
First Certificate	18-29	30-41	42-53	54
First Diploma	36-59	60-83	84-95	96-108

29. BTEC Firsts Applied Science Units are 60 Guided Learning Hours, How will I fit this in my timetable?

The 60 guided learning hours consists of teaching time, supported learning, homework and other independent learning time and so it is not necessary to provide the full 60 hours as timetabled teaching.

There are a number of approaches to timetabling for BTEC First Certificate and Diploma depending on the restrictions of the timetabling processes in your centre. Some centres prefer to deliver and assess one unit for all of the available timetable sessions before moving on to the next unit whilst others prefer to deliver and assess across a number of units.

One of the great benefits of BTEC Applied Science programmes is the autonomy that centres have to design, deliver and assess programmes in a manner that suits their particular cohort of learners. Access to laboratories is essential for parts of the programme to be delivered and assessed and this must be taken into account when planning the timetable.

30. Can I use writing frames work sheets to guide my learners?

Yes, in setting out the task relevant teacher support may be given to help structure the learner's work. Be careful however that in providing support on the structure of the work you do not inadvertently provide the evidence required. The learner must be able to produce independent evidence to meet the assessment criteria related to the task. Teachers are required and must make available to the EV any documentation in terms of writing frames and worksheets linked to an assignment brief.

Preparing for BTEC First Certificate and Diploma in Applied Science new specification 2010

31. I am teaching learners in Year 9 but I am not registering them until Year 10 (November 2010) by which time the specification will have changed? What happens to the work they have already done? Does Edexcel have a transitional timetable to help me manage the Delivery and Assessment of this work?

The current specification has a certification end date August 30, 2012 so centres that register learners in 2009 will have three academic years to complete the course and claim certification.

Centres that are interested in registering their current Year 9 learners when they are in Year 10 on the current specification can do so, providing they register their learners by August 30, 2010. They will then have two years to complete and obtain certification on the current specification.

There will also be an option of transferring credit for learners that have completed units on the 2006 Specification when the 2010 specification comes into effect. To help centres there is a mapping document in the 2010 specification (publication code: BF02185) which will be available to download from the website by the autumn half term.

We are organising support events in the autumn term for the specification 2010, details will be posted on the subject page of the website soon.

32. Why is the specification changing and what does this mean for my centre?

The specification is being reaccredited onto the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) for first teaching from 1 September 2010.

The revised specification will have smaller units which will provide flexibility for your centres and learners. We are also developing significantly improved support materials for teachers and learners with the revised specification.

Support

33. What support is available to me?

Please find below details of support available to you.

Subject Advisor

Provides direct contact to advisors from across Edexcel on operational and subject specific issues relating to the teaching and assessment of the specifications. Email ScienceSubjectAdvisor@edexcelexperts.co.uk or call 0844 576 0037.

Ask the Expert

Provides direct contact to a senior examiner to respond to subject specific questions relating to the teaching and assessment of the BTEC Firsts and Nationals in Applied Science specifications. Email: BTECFirstscience@edexcelexperts.co.uk

Regional Quality Mangers

You may contact your RQM for support with quality assurance procedures, such as National Standards Sampling or Centre Risk Assessment. New centres can expect to have some support from their RQM. Please see 'I am a quality nominee page' on website.

BTEC Team

You can call the dedicated BTEC Team on 0844 576 0026 for enquires on registrations, entries, certification, fees, invoices or for other general information about implementing BTEC Firsts in Applied Science. Alternatively use Ask Edexcel, an interactive database of frequently asked questions www.edexcel.com/askedexcel