

The Revised BTEC HNCs and HNDs

As part of the ongoing updating process Edexcel has revised its portfolio of BTEC Higher National Certificate and BTEC Higher National Diploma programmes. Edexcel has submitted these qualifications to QCA in a phased programme for accreditation onto the National Qualifications Framework at Level 4. Accreditation by the regulator is also a phased process, and centres will be kept informed of the accredited titles via our website. This information can be accessed via www.edexcel.org.uk then by select *BTEC Higher Nationals* then *Accreditation Update*; the list of accredited titles can then be accessed, as well as information about those awaiting accreditation or development.

As foreshadowed in the Government White Paper on Higher Education these revised BTEC HNDs will become part of the Foundation Degree Framework. Exact details of this are currently being discussed with key partners. Centres will be kept updated through communications on our website.

Initially we have identified a number of Pathfinders in a number of sectors, which will be developed alongside the respective HNDs, and become - following validation - BTEC Foundation Degrees. It is anticipated that these will be available from September 2004.

Centres are reminded that in order to deliver any BTEC qualification they must have BTEC centre approval and BTEC qualification approval for the respective qualification(s). Details of approval requirements are on the Edexcel website (see *Services for Centres* and then select *Centre Approval* or *Qualification Approval* under the relevant section – *FE Colleges & Schools*, *Higher Education* or *Employers & Training Providers*).

As these qualifications are published centres may decide to apply to offer the revised BTEC Higher Nationals from either September 2003 or September 2004. Centres already approved to deliver the BTEC HND/Cs in a particular sector may continue to offer these until the end of their validity. A letter giving details of the automatic approval process for centres already approved to offer the existing pre-cursor HNDs and HNCs is being sent to centres in July 2003. Publicly funded institutions and organisations should check the funding situation with the appropriate funding agencies.

Key Features of BTEC Higher Nationals

The BTEC Higher Nationals are designed to provide a specialist vocational programme, linked to professional body requirements and National Occupational Standards where appropriate, with a strong work related emphasis. The qualifications provide a thorough grounding in the key concepts and practical skills required in their sector and their national recognition by employers support progression direct into employment. The BTEC Higher Nationals offer a strong emphasis on practical skills development alongside the development of requisite knowledge and understanding in their sector. Learners are attracted to this strong vocational programme of study which meets their individual progression needs whether this is into employment or to further study on degree or professional courses.

The BTEC Higher Nationals have been developed to focus on:

- the education and training of those who are employed at a professional level in a variety of types of technical and expert work in the area of study
- providing opportunities to achieve a nationally recognised level four vocationally specific qualification
- providing opportunities for full-time learners to gain a nationally recognised vocationally specific qualification, to enter employment, or progress to higher education qualifications such as a full or part-time degree
- providing opportunities for learners to focus on the development of the higher level skills
- providing opportunities for learners to develop a range of skills and techniques and attributes essential for successful performance in working life.

This qualification meets the needs of the above rationale by:

- developing a range of skills, techniques, personal qualities and attributes essential for successful performance in working life and thereby enabling learners to make an immediate contribution to employment at the appropriate professional level
- preparing learners for a range of appropriate careers in the field of study
- equipping individuals with knowledge, understanding and skills for success in employment in the related industries
- providing specialist studies relevant to vocations and professions in which learners are working or intend to seek employment within related industries
- enabling progression to an undergraduate degree or further professional qualification in a related area
- providing a significant basis for progression to Professional Body Recognition where applicable

Progression

Progression from the BTEC Higher National programmes can be directly into employment or via further study at degree level. Employed learners will continue in employment and many full-time learners go into employment on achievement of their award where they will often undertake further study towards professional body examinations in the sector.

A key progression path for BTEC Higher National Certificate and Diploma learners is to the second or third year of an Honours degree programme, depending on the match of the Higher National units to the degree programme in question.

Qualification Requirement

With the ongoing revision of BTEC HNDs and HNCs, Edexcel will publish a Qualification Requirement for each qualification, in line with the phased submissions by Edexcel to QCA. These are posted under the respective qualifications and in the specifications. The Qualification Requirement sets out the aims and rationale of the

qualification and provides the framework to develop the standard specification. This Qualification Requirement also provides the framework for other validating bodies wishing to develop programme specifications carrying any of the qualifications titles included in this specification. The Qualification Requirement aims to:

- provide consistent and comparable standards in the same subject/vocational area
- ensure that specifications address the content and skill development required by the sector, as identified with the SSCs and professional bodies
- ensure that the content and skill development of the qualification is at Level 4 in the QCA NQF and the Intermediate level in the QAA HEQF for higher education
- help higher education institutions, employers and professional bodies know what has been studied and assessed.

Professional Body Recognition and National Occupational Standards

The BTEC Higher Nationals have been developed with career progression and recognition by professional bodies in mind. It is essential that students gain the maximum benefit from their programme of study.

Further details of professional body recognition and exemptions of BTEC Higher Nationals will be published shortly on our website.

BTEC Higher Nationals are designed to relate to the National Occupational Standards in the sector which in turn form the basis of the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). Where appropriate, through the study of core and relevant specialist units students will cover much of the underpinning knowledge, skills and understanding for the relevant NVQ Level 4 units. BTEC Higher Nationals do not purport to deliver occupational competence in the sector, which should be demonstrated in a work context. However, the qualifications provide much of the underpinning knowledge for the National Occupational Standards, as well as developing practical skills in preparation for work and possible achievement of NVQs in due course.

Each unit identifies relevant aspects of the National Occupational Standards that are addressed by the outcomes and content of the unit.

Higher Level Skills

The successful achievement of the BTEC qualifications at Levels 4 expect learners to demonstrate a high level of skills including:

- Research and Investigative skills including:
- Synthesis of a range of concepts, knowledge and skills
- Application of complex theories to practical realistic work situations

- Independence of approach to study and the generation of evidence
- Ability to engage with complex and/or unpredictable situations
- Ability to take responsibility to manage and direct their own and others' activities
- Insight and judgement in relation to the margins and consequences of error
- Responsive to change and ability to multi-task
- Ability to innovate and work in a creative way

Each Qualification Requirement will identify and amplify the higher level skills appropriate to the qualification.

BTEC Higher National Certificate

The 10-unit BTEC Higher National Certificate provides a specialist work-related programme of study that covers the key knowledge, understanding and practical skills required in the sector and also offers particular specialist emphasis through the choice of specialist units.

BTEC Higher National Certificates provide a nationally recognised qualification that offers career progression for those already in employment. The qualifications are mode free but they are primarily undertaken part-time learners studying over two years. In some sectors there are opportunities for those wishing to complete an intensive programme of study in a shorter period of time.

The qualification offers an engaging programme for higher education learners who are clear about the area of employment that they wish to enter. Their access to suitable work situations may allow learners to achieve NVQ qualifications where applicable.

BTEC Higher National Diploma

The 16-unit BTEC Higher National Diploma provides greater depth and specialisation than BTEC Higher National Certificate qualification. These qualifications are mode-free but are predominately followed by full-time learners and allow progression into or within employment in the appropriate sector, either directly on the achievement of the award or following further study to degree level.

The BTEC Higher National Diploma also provides for suitable work-experience in order for learners to apply their knowledge and practical skills in the workplace during their study.

The qualification prepares learners for employment in a particular vocational sector and is available for learners who are aged 16+, who have already decided that they wish to enter the sector, and have relevant academic ability and motivation to achieve. Some adult learners may wish to make the commitment required by this qualification in order to enter a specialist area of employment or progress into higher education. Other learners may want to extend the specialism that they followed on the BTEC Higher National Certificate programme. Progression from this qualification may well be into or within employment in the sector where learners may work towards membership of professional bodies if applicable.

Centre and Programme Approval

Centres intending to offer BTEC Higher National qualifications will be required to demonstrate that they have all resources necessary to deliver the individual programmes, to the specification requirements. They will also demonstrate that they have in place policies and procedures for recruitment of learners that are fair, clear and explicit, and that recruitment with integrity is evident.

Monitoring Centres' Internal Quality Systems

Centres will be required to demonstrate ongoing fulfilment of approval criteria over time and across all programme areas. This will include; consistent application of policies affecting learner registrations and learner appeals, and the effectiveness of internal verification or standardisation processes.

Centres may submit to Edexcel scrutiny of their provision. Alternatively, centres may present evidence of their working within the context of a recognised Code of Practice, such as that of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, for the purpose of confirming the application of the relevant Code. Edexcel reserves the right to confirm independently that these processes are operating to our satisfaction.