



NEXT STEPS – STAGE 2 FINAL RESEARCH REPORT

Prepared for Edexcel by

BASIS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Against the central objective of establishing the value delivered by BTEC qualifications, the stage 2 survey results reported here provide ample evidence that BTEC qualifications enable progression to both further studies and employment.

A simple interrogation of main activity pre to post BTEC unveils significant shifts indicative of progression – shifts that predominantly take place within related subject areas / sectors. These shifts occur within all BTEC qualification groups, but are particularly clear-cut amongst National Diploma learners. Prior to completing their BTEC qualification, the majority of National Diploma learners specified either school (41%) or college / sixth form studies (32%) as their main activity, but following completion of the BTEC, the majority of this group (50%) indicated university studies as their main activity. For a large proportion of learners, the Level 3 BTEC qualification thus enabled progression to further studies at Level 4.

In terms of attributing this to the BTEC qualification alone, it is important to recognise that an overall proportion of 35% completed other qualifications alongside their BTEC, suggesting that the latter need not have been the main driver of progression.

Conversely, BTEC qualifications are clearly relevant to current activities – 70% of all learners consider their BTEC qualification somewhat or very relevant. Moreover, the weight of BTEC qualifications as a driver of progression is evidenced by the fact that learners completing BTECs with a view to qualifying for further studies identify the BTEC as a formal requirement (50%) or at least an important prerequisite (29%). Although less emphasis is placed on BTEC qualifications as a formal requirement by those completing it to qualify for employment, the suggestion remains the same within this group, namely that BTEC qualifications play a significant role in bringing about progression.

It is in other words clear that BTEC qualifications deliver value in terms of enabling ‘harder’ progression, e.g. from one educational level to the next or from education to employment. However, there is also ample evidence that BTEC qualifications deliver on ‘softer’ aspects of progression.

Catering for learners motivated by a vocational approach to learning is significant in this regard, with more than half of the learners who completed the stage 2 survey indicating that they were motivated by the practical, real-world approach to learning. Indeed, when honing in on the single most important reason for choosing BTEC studies, 17% reference the widely acknowledged learning style.

Whilst learners overwhelmingly perceive that BTEC studies improved their skills across the board, the indication is that BTEC qualifications contribute relatively more to ‘softer’ skills such as time management, organisation and team work than ‘harder’ skills, including IT, grammar and numeracy skills. With the exception of foreign language skills, it is however worth stressing the broad improvement of skills, reference the fact that even if this was improved the least, a very considerable 45% still stated that their numeracy skills had improved in conjunction with their BTEC studies.

Against the objective of identifying effects of BTEC qualifications on social mobility, the stage 2 study unveiled two indications of this. Firstly, the proportion of learners from a C2DE background who progressed to university studies (25%) does indicate that BTEC qualifications contribute to social mobility or at least that BTEC qualifications help bring about the foundations for the kind of employment that would ultimately bring about progression in socio-economic terms. Secondly, the considerable proportion of learners (69%) from a C2DE background who indicated that they were the first in their family to study at university also suggests that BTEC qualifications help put in place the foundations for social mobility. Of course, it is important to acknowledge in this context that a university degree does not automatically translate into a job that merits classification in a higher socio-economic grade. That said, with university level education often being a pre-requisite for such jobs, the role played by BTEC qualifications in bringing about access to university studies does indicate that BTEC qualifications play a role here.

BACKGROUND

Following on from the BTEC Progression Pilot Study carried out by Basis in 2009, Edexcel commissioned a repeat of the two-staged study. As was the case in the pilot study, the online stage 1 survey served mainly as a vehicle for recruitment of respondents for a more elaborate follow-up survey, which was executed using both an online and computer aided telephone interviewing methodology.

Whilst a reasonably robust sample – at both stage 1 and 2 – was achieved in 2009, there were restrictions in terms of the scope for analysing the data by sub-group, i.e. it was not possible to investigate progression patterns among learners who obtained BTEC qualifications other than the National Diploma and the First Diploma. With a view to achieving an even more robust sample and greater scope for sub-group analysis, Edexcel in 2010 initiated a programme aimed at driving participation through direct contact with learning centres, distribution of flyers and posters in learning centres and a variety of online initiatives including a link to the stage 1 survey on the Edexcel website (see below).



From a respondent point of view, participation was incentivised by a prize draw for several Apple iPads, which were also featured prominently in the marketing materials.

Having launched in July 2010, the stage 1 survey, which was designed, programmed and hosted by Edexcel, ran until the end of September at which point a final stage 1 report was issued. In terms of the questionnaire used, only minor tweaks were made to the questionnaire used in 2009, with core question areas therefore remaining:

- BTEC qualification completed, including subject
- Next steps, e.g. further studies, employment, etc.
- Impact of BTEC qualification on preparedness for further studies or employment

From the 1,361 possible respondents recruited at stage 1, a total of 367 learners completed the stage 2 survey, which ran from 24th January to 7th February. 292 of these completed the survey online, with the remaining 75 completing telephone interviews.

In terms of questionnaire, the 2010 stage 2 survey broadly mirrors that in 2009, but three important additions were made:

- Question on delivery of CBI employability skills
- Question on delivery of Higher Education skills
- Question gauging the impact of BTEC qualifications on social mobility

Whilst data is currently being compiled with a view to comparing the stage 2 sample with the broader universe, it is important to stress that the stage 2 sample cannot be assumed to represent the universe of BTEC learners. Findings must therefore be treated with due caution.

OBJECTIVES

The overarching objective of the research remains unchanged and can be stated in simple terms as establishing the 'value' delivered by BTEC qualifications. Here we would take 'value' to mean 'progression', but would stress that 1) learners can progress in different ways, e.g. to employment or to further studies, and 2) they may do so either as a direct or partial result of having completed their BTEC qualifications. On this basis, the overarching objective can be broken down further as follows:

- Do BTEC qualifications enable progression in terms of work?
 - Do learners progress within a field related to the subject matter of their BTEC?
- Do BTEC qualifications enable progression in terms of further studies?
 - Do learners progress within the subject matter of their BTEC?

Whilst it is entirely valid to think about progression in the above terms, it is worth allowing for and keeping in mind the following when going forward:

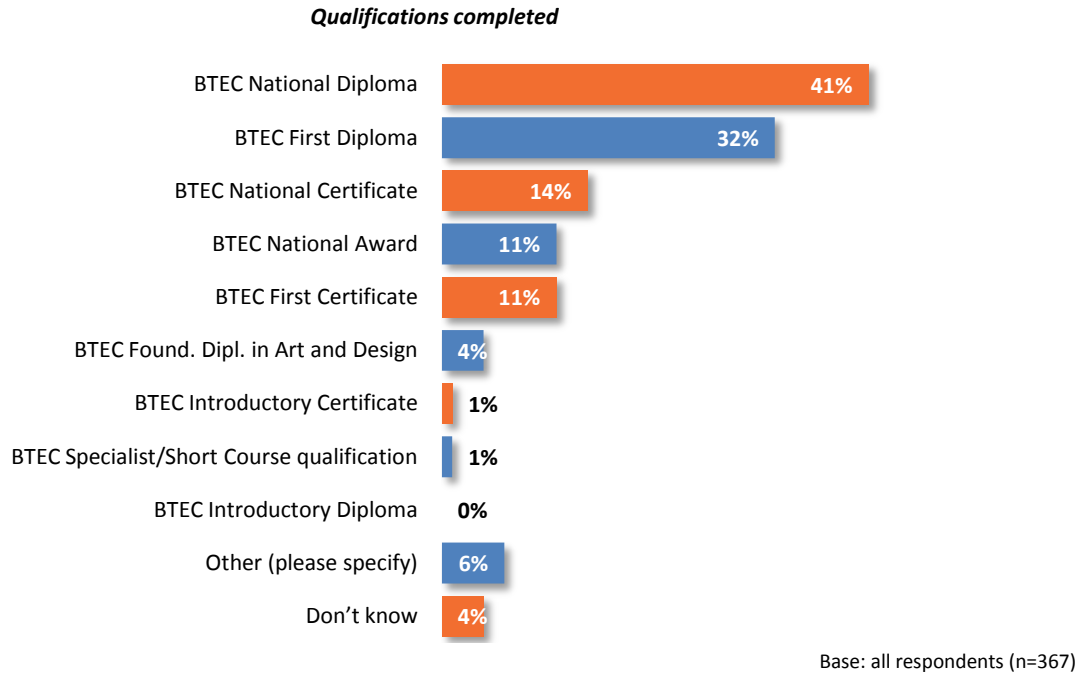
- BTEC qualifications may have short-term vs. long-term effects (or both)
- A 'softer' dimension of progression may be relevant
 - Some might place more emphasis on progression in terms of achieving self-fulfilment rather than career progression
 - Having had ones confidence boosted within employment would certainly count as progression for some people, but this would not count as progression according to the 'hard' definition outline above

Following revision of the questionnaire in the lead up to the stage 2 fieldwork, three additional objectives were added.

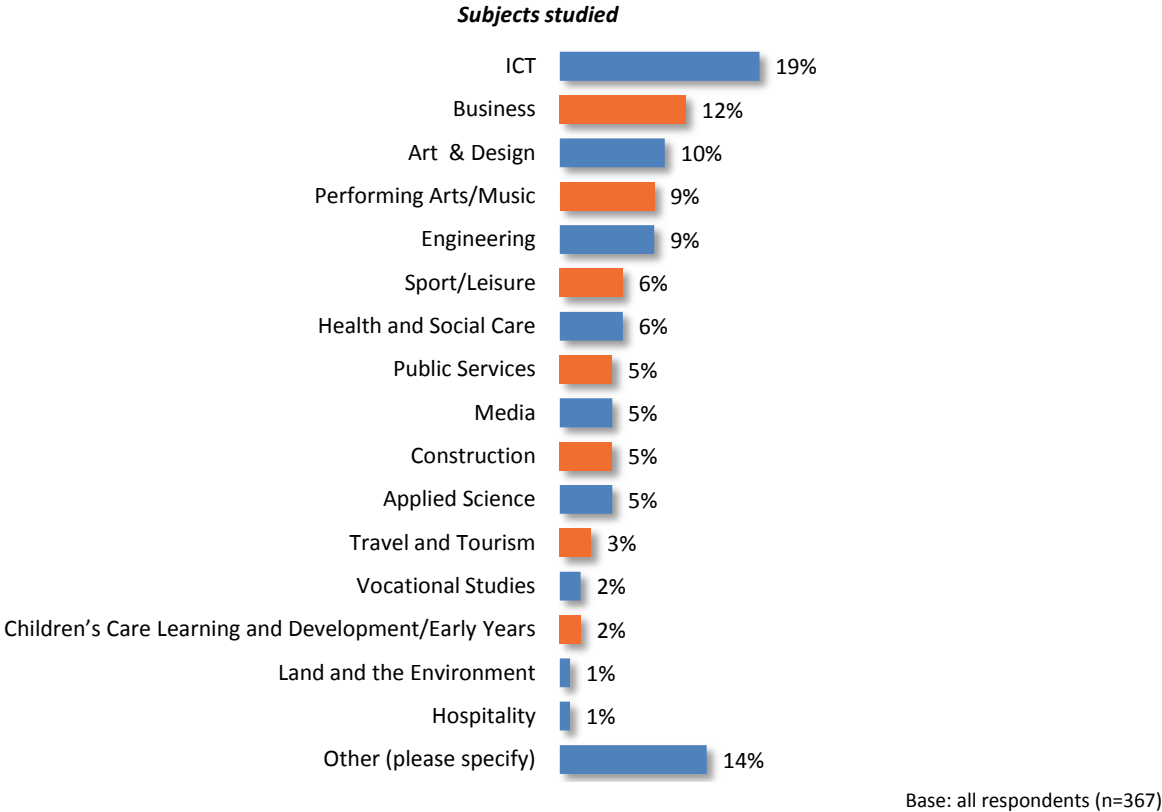
- The extent to which BTEC qualifications deliver against CBI employability skills
- The extent to which BTEC qualifications deliver against Higher Education skills
- The effects of BTEC qualifications on social mobility

SAMPLE PROFILE

Reflecting the fallout at stage 1, the stage 2 sample is heavily skewed towards National Diploma and First Diploma learners. However, it is important to note that a sufficiently robust base size was achieved for National Certificate, National Award and First Certificate learners, although scope for conducting sub-group analysis within these groups is limited.



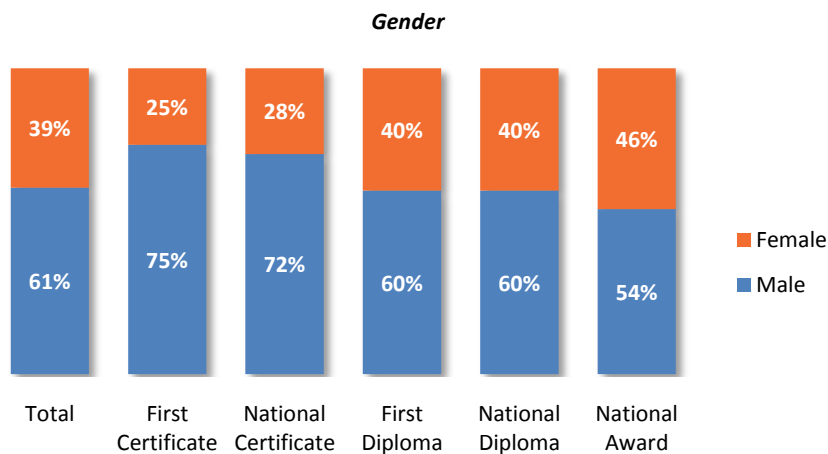
The distribution of subjects studied at the overall level is slightly skewed towards learners who achieved BTEC qualifications in ICT. However, the Arts are also solidly represented, with Art & Design and Performing Arts/Music combined accounting for 19% of the total sample. Business and Engineering are other subject areas with substantial representation in the sample.



ICT and Business are represented across Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications, but First Certificate learners are significantly more likely to have completed BTEC qualifications within this subject area as well as Business and Applied Science. Engineering accounts for a significantly larger proportion of National Certificate learners, whereas the National Award has the highest concentration of performing Arts/Music learners.

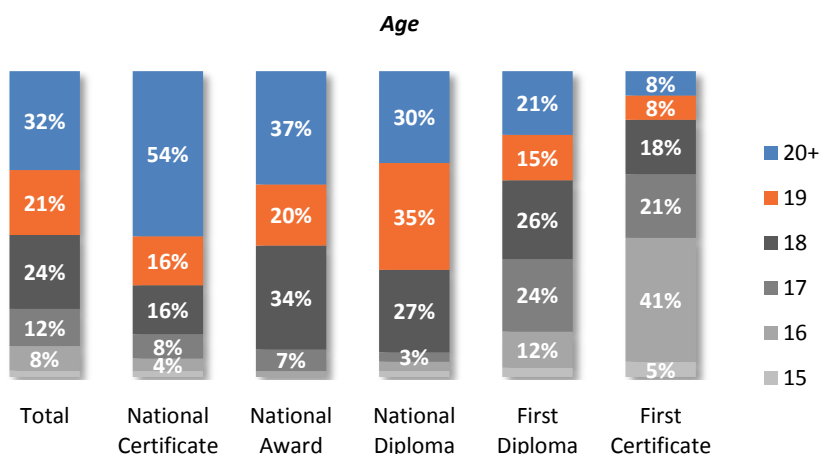
	National Diploma	First Diploma	National Certificate	National Award	First Certificate
<i>Base</i>	<i>n=152</i>	<i>n=117</i>	<i>n=50</i>	<i>n=41</i>	<i>n=40</i>
ICT	20%	21%	30%	20%	38%
Business	13%	18%	14%	15%	33%
Art & Design	10%	8%	2%	2%	8%
Sport/Leisure	10%	5%	6%	5%	13%
Performing Arts/Music	9%	10%	4%	15%	10%
Applied Science	7%	9%	6%	0%	18%
Engineering	7%	3%	28%	7%	10%
Health and Social Care	7%	9%	2%	2%	8%
Public Services	5%	7%	2%	7%	5%
Construction	3%	4%	6%	2%	3%
Hospitality	3%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Media	3%	6%	8%	5%	8%
Travel and Tourism	3%	7%	0%	5%	3%
CCL & Development	1%	3%	0%	5%	3%
Land and the Environment	1%	0%	6%	2%	3%
Vocational Studies	1%	0%	0%	5%	0%
Other	13%	11%	12%	20%	18%

Overall, the stage 2 sample fell out slightly skewed towards males, but gender skews are particularly prevalent within the First Certificate and National Certificate sub-groups, whereas in the case of National Award learners, the sample broadly fell out with an even gender split.



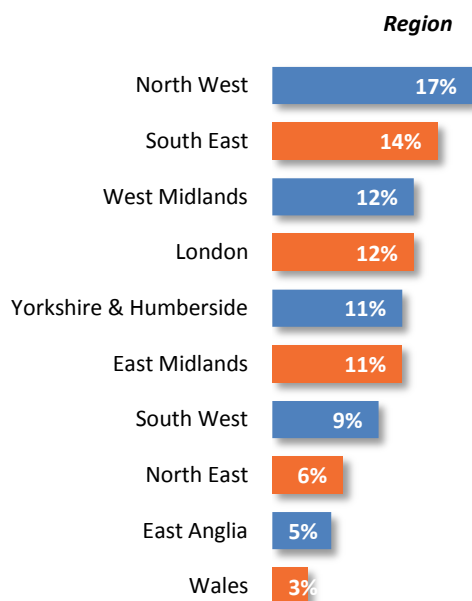
Base: all respondents (n=367)

Looking at the age breakdown within qualifications completed, it is relatively unsurprising that Level 2 qualifications are skewed younger and Level 3 qualifications older. However, note the larger proportion of older learners within both National and First qualifications, e.g. significant proportions of First Diploma and First Certificate learners fall outside of the expected 14-16 age band. Similarly in the case of Level 3 qualifications, the significant proportion – particularly in the case of National Certificate – of learners above the 16-18 age band. This suggests that such BTEC qualifications represent and are utilised as a ‘second chance opportunity’ for learners who for whatever reason have followed a more conventional educational route.



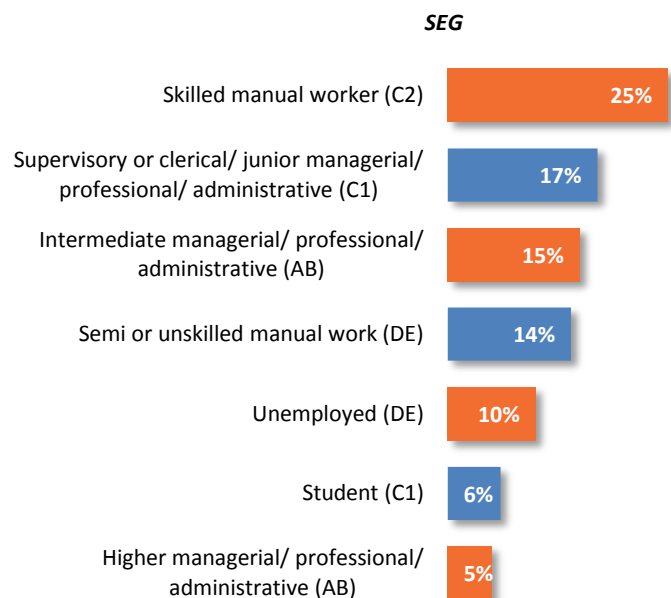
Base: all respondents (n=367), all ND (n=152), FD (n=117), NC (n=50), NA (n=41), FC (n=40)

A good spread of regions was achieved in the stage 2 survey.



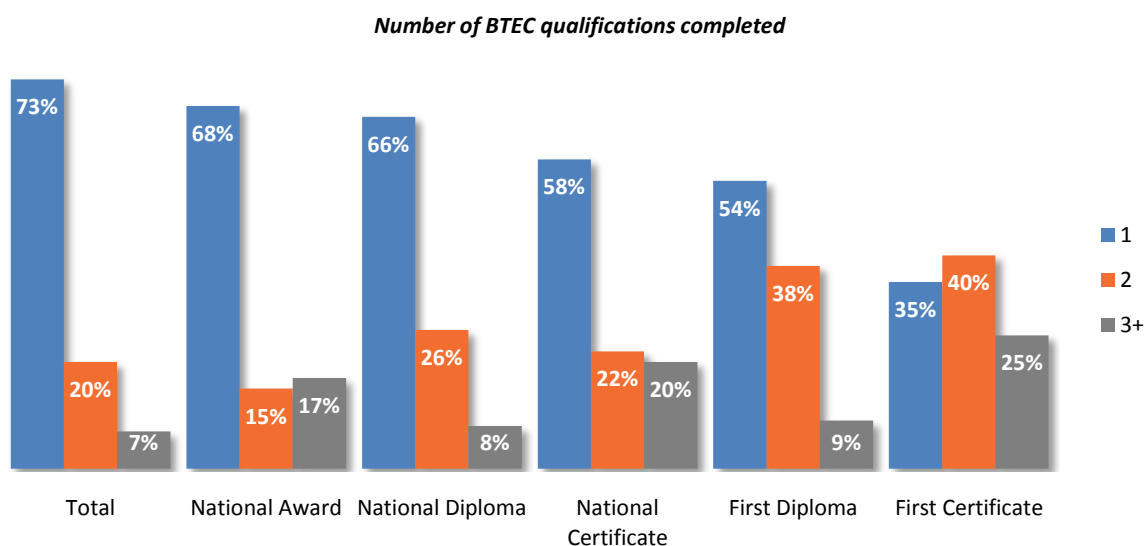
Base: all respondents (n=367)

With a view to querying social mobility, a question was added to the stage 2 survey asking respondents to provide employment details on their parents. In terms of socio-economic grouping, the sample is composed of 20% ABs, 23% C1s, 25% C2s and 24% DEs. In addition to this, 7% indicated that their parents had retired.



Base: all respondents (n=367)

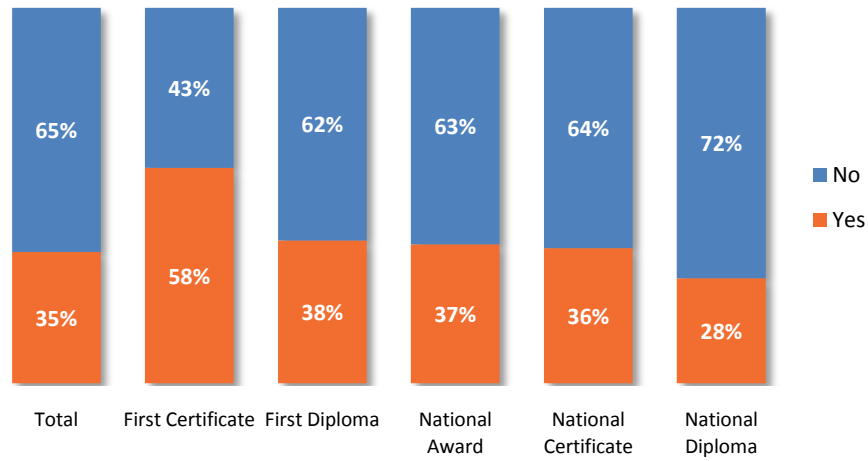
At the total level, nearly three in seven learners completed more than one BTEC qualification. Looking within qualifications, it is clear that Level 2 learners – as evidenced by the considerably larger proportions amongst First Diploma and Certificate learners below – are considerably more likely to have completed more than one BTEC.



Base: all respondents (n=367), all ND (n=152), FD (n=117), NC (n=50), NA (n=41), FC (n=40)

More than one in three learners at the total level completed other qualifications alongside their BTEC studies (within six months of having completed their BTEC). Again, the suggestion is that learners at Level 2 – at least in the case of First Certificate learners – are the most likely to have combined BTEC and other studies. However, leaving aside the National Diploma learners, more than one in three follow this pattern within each qualification group.

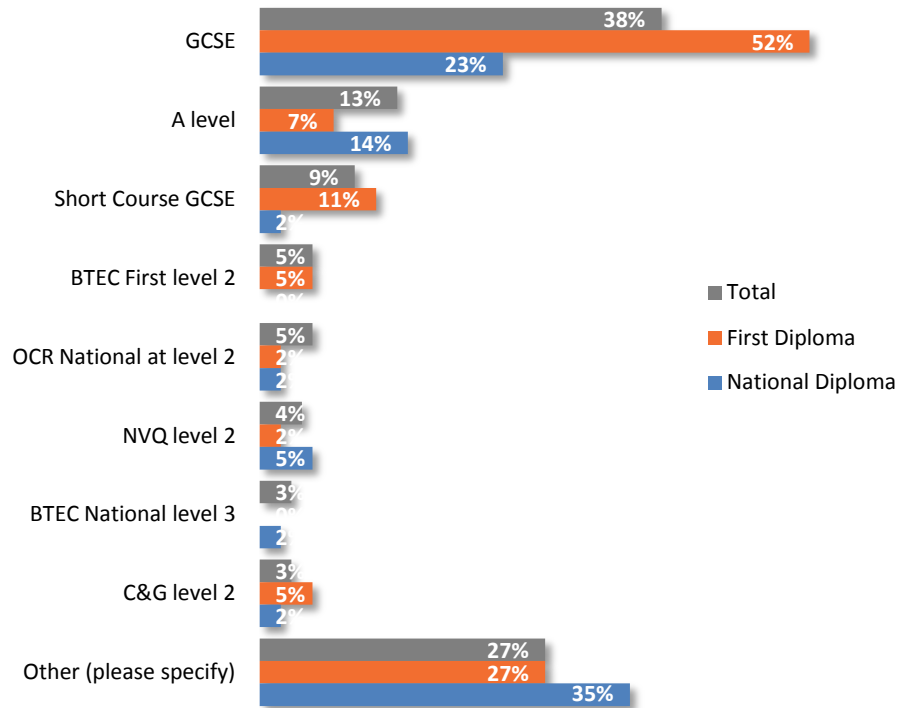
Other qualification completed



Base: all respondents (n=367), all ND (n=152), FD (n=117), NC (n=50), NA (n=41), FC (n=40)

BTEC qualifications are most commonly combined with GCSE studies (most prominently English and Maths), particularly in the case of First Diploma learners. At the total level as well as within BTEC qualifications, there is a clear tendency towards combining BTEC studies with other academic as opposed to vocational qualifications, although it should be noted that base sizes are insufficient for analysis within all BTEC qualifications. The proportion who specified the qualification studied concurrently with their BTEC mainly referenced key skills. Please note that other qualifications making up less than 3% at the total level are not shown below.

Other qualifications completed: title of

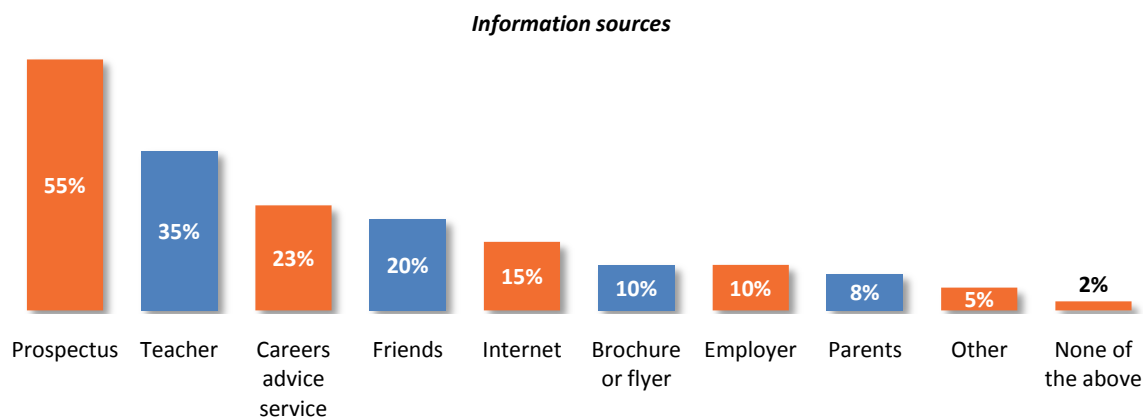


Base: all respondents who completed other qualifications (n=128), FD (n=44) & ND (n=43)

Looking within the group of learners who combined BTEC and GCSE studies, six in ten noted that studying for the BTEC had aided their GCSE studies.

SELECTION & MOTIVATION

Upon being asked what information sources brought the BTEC to their attention, learners overwhelmingly point to prospectuses and teachers, although careers advice services play a role here too.

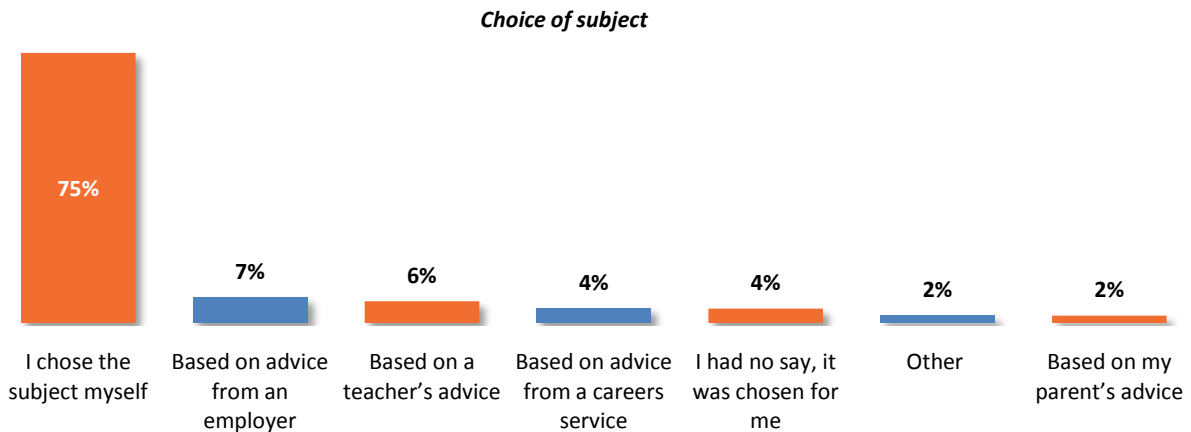


Base: all respondents (n=367)

At the sub-group level, a number of differences related to information sources appear, most notably the greater reliance among Level 2 students on teachers and, specifically in the case of First Certificate learners, parents. Also worthy of mention is the substantial proportion of National Certificate learners who heard about the BTEC qualification they recently completed from an employer.

	National Diploma	First Diploma	National Certificate	National Award	First Certificate
<i>Base</i>	<i>n=152</i>	<i>n=117</i>	<i>n=50</i>	<i>n=41</i>	<i>n=40</i>
From a college prospectus	62%	63%	52%	61%	45%
From teacher	33%	39%	22%	29%	65%
From a careers /careers advice service	24%	29%	16%	20%	25%
From friends	20%	26%	18%	20%	25%
Saw something about it on the internet	14%	19%	10%	17%	10%
Saw something about it in a brochure / flyer	8%	14%	2%	20%	3%
From an employer	3%	2%	26%	17%	5%
From parents	9%	9%	4%	5%	18%
Read about it in a newspaper	3%	5%	2%	2%	3%
Heard something about it on the Radio	3%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Saw something about it on TV	1%	3%	0%	0%	3%
Other	5%	8%	2%	5%	0%
None of the above	3%	2%	2%	0%	0%

Whether parents were involved in bringing the given BTEC qualification to the attention of the learner or not, the subject was overwhelmingly chosen autonomously.

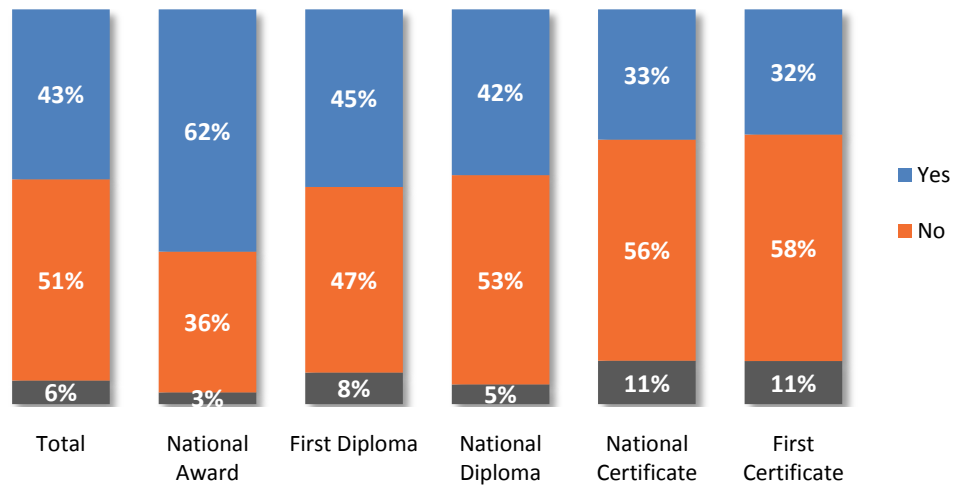


Of course, it cannot be ruled out that social desirability plays into this. For example, employers clearly do play a role in determining the subject studied amongst National Certificate learners who are also more likely to indicate that the subject was chosen for them.

	National Diploma	First Diploma	National Certificate	National Award	First Certificate
<i>Base</i>	<i>n=152</i>	<i>n=117</i>	<i>n=50</i>	<i>n=41</i>	<i>n=40</i>
I chose the subject myself	86%	75%	68%	71%	78%
Based on my parent's advice	1%	5%	0%	0%	0%
Based on a teacher's advice	5%	7%	4%	5%	15%
Based on advice from a careers service	3%	6%	0%	2%	3%
Based on advice from an employer	2%	1%	18%	10%	0%
I had no say, it was chosen for me	1%	4%	10%	5%	5%
Other	1%	2%	0%	7%	0%

Looking at motivations, it is clear that BTEC qualifications are rarely considered solus, indeed at the total level more than two in five learners considered other qualifications, although they eventually settled for the BTEC. National Award learners in particular are likely to have considered other qualifications, whereas more than half of National Certificate and First Certificate learners indicate that they did not consider other qualifications.

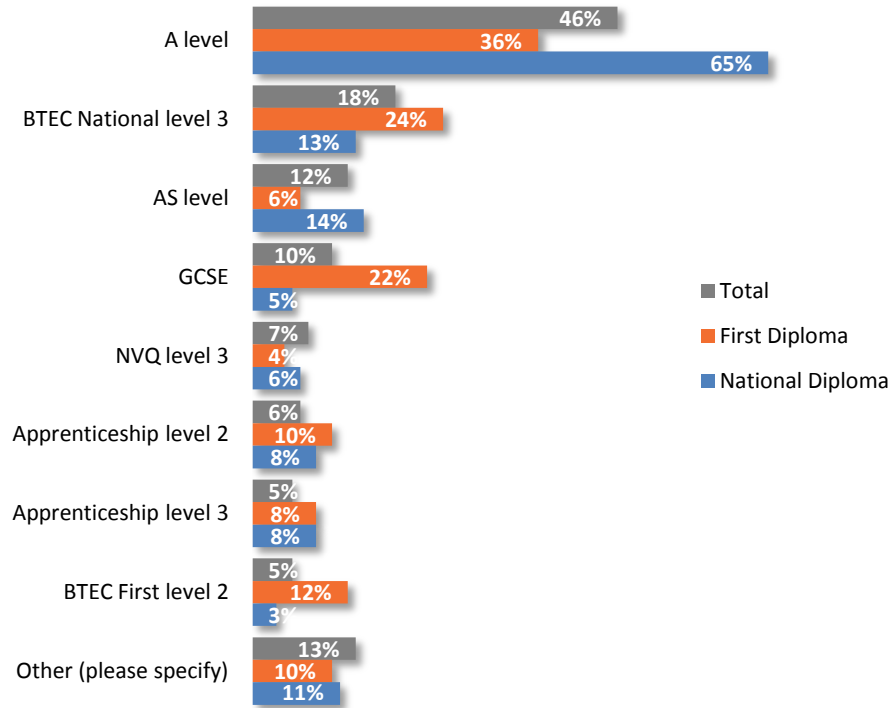
Other qualifications considered



Base: all who had a say in choosing their qualification (n=352), ND (n=150), FD (n=112), NC (n=45), NA (n=39), FC (n=38)

Honing in on other qualifications considered, which can only be robustly analysed within First and National Diploma learners, it is clear that A-levels is the alternative most commonly considered. Unsurprisingly, GCSEs feature more prominently on the list of other qualifications considered by First Diploma learners, who are also the most likely to consider a Level 3 BTEC. Conversely, A-levels are predominantly considered by learners who eventually go onto complete National Diploma qualifications.

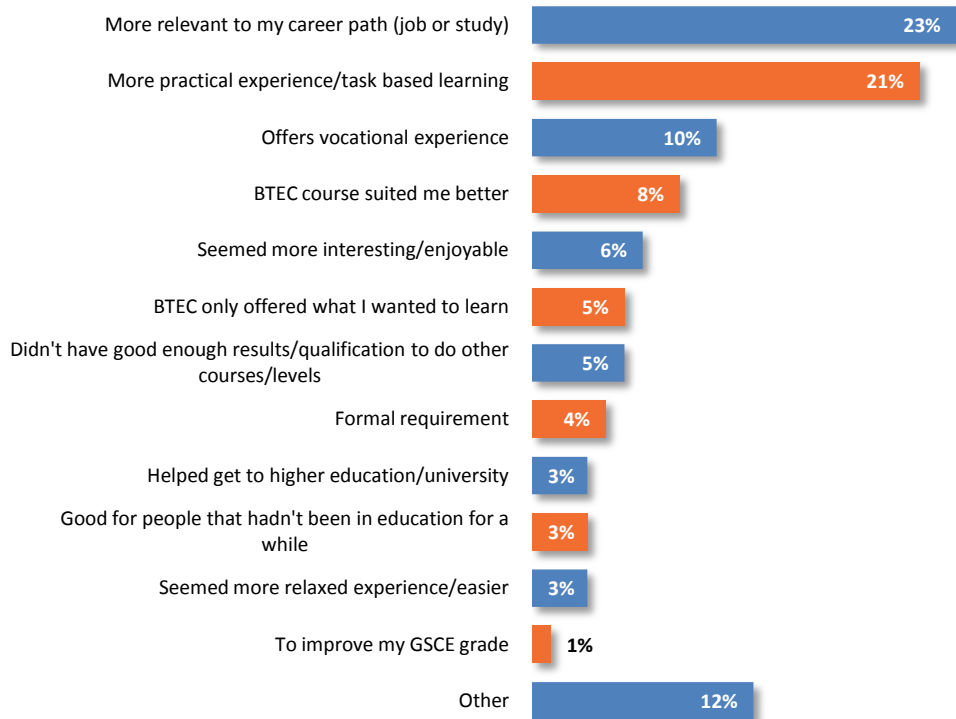
Other qualifications considered: title of



Base: all who considered other qualifications (n=153), FD (n=50), ND (n=63)

Considerers of other qualifications were subsequently asked to elaborate in their own words on their choice of the BTEC as opposed to the competing qualification. Unsurprisingly, a broad range of reasons were quoted here but particular emphasis was put on the relevance of and practical nature of BTEC studies. In other words, the clear indication is that BTEC studies are proactively chosen over competing qualifications due to factors that are endogenous to vocational learning.

Reasons for choosing BTEC over other qualifications



Base: all who considered other qualifications (n=153)

EXAMPLE VERBATIM RESPONSES:

"The BTEC qualification related to what I wanted to go into with my career."

"The BTEC qualification was more applicable to what career path I wanted."

"I chose to do BTEC as I preferred to do more practical work than I would otherwise have done in A-levels."

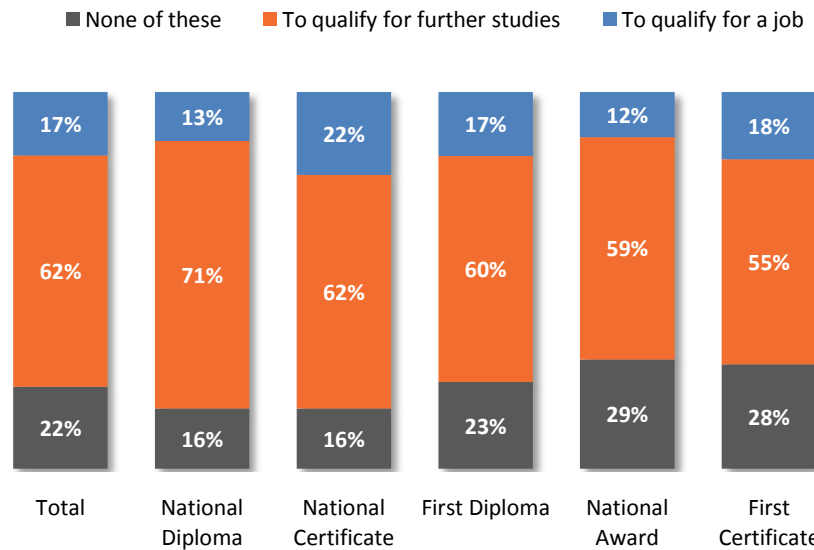
"The reason I chose a BTEC Qualification over other qualifications, such as A-levels, was because I consider myself to be more practical than academic."

"I wanted some vocational experience as I wasn't sure what I was going to do after college - e.g. Uni or work."

"More practical and vocational which gave me skills to use in the career I would like to pursue. It also gave practical support in the specific areas of the career I would like to pursue."

To probe short term motivations for the choice of BTEC qualifications, learners were asked whether their motivation was mostly to do with obtaining qualifications needed in conjunction with a job or further studies. Here, the majority indicated being motivated in the short term by a need for qualifications qualifying them for further studies. Whilst no statistically significant differences were identified between qualification groups, it is indicated that National Diploma and Award learners are least motivated by the prospect of qualifying for a job. Conversely, qualifying for a job appears most motivating for National Certificate, First Certificate and First Diploma learners.

Motivations



Base: all respondents (n=367), all ND (n=152), FD (n=117), NC (n=50), NA (n=41), FC (n=40)

Whether motivated in the short term by the prospect of employment or further studies, learners were also asked to ponder their choice of BTEC qualification in broad terms. Leaving aside differences between different qualification groups, the overarching finding here is that learners are motivated first and foremost by a desire for learning about a subject of interest to them, but the particular nature of BTEC studies is another factor that weights in heavily here. The practical, real-world approach to learning, the combination of practical and theoretical knowledge and the relevance in relation to future or existing employment are all features of the BTEC that are commonly referenced. Again, the indication is that the choice of BTEC is pro-active and not imposed to any great extent by challenges to do with qualifying for other courses.

	Total
	<i>Base</i> <i>n=352</i>
I wanted to learn more about a subject I was interested in	57%
I considered the BTEC a better way of studying because it provides a practical, real-world approach to learning	53%
I wanted a qualification that combines practical and theoretical knowledge	50%
I thought that the BTEC would be better suited to someone like me	48%
The BTEC was more relevant to the job I want to be doing than other qualifications	43%
I considered it the best preparation for further studies	41%
I thought the BTEC looked more interesting than courses I looked at	41%
I wanted a different learning experience	36%
It had different learning style	35%
I wanted an alternative to A levels/GCSEs	32%
I wanted to be treated as an adult	31%
I needed a qualification / qualifications in a specific subject to get into university	30%
It was more likely than other qualifications to help me get a job	27%
The BTEC was my only option for getting a qualification in this area	19%
I wanted to combine GCSE with a BTEC First qualification	14%
I needed a qualification / qualifications in a specific subject to get into college	12%
I wanted to combine A-Levels with a BTEC National qualification	11%
Other (please specify)	3%

As regards differences between different BTEC learners, National Award learners are particularly prone to invoking subject interest, the practical, real-world approach to learning and the combination of practical and theoretical knowledge. Perhaps more pertinently, National Award learners also stress being treated as an adult alongside the desire to combine A-Levels with a BTEC National qualification. Level 2 learners on the other hand place far more emphasis on the ability to combine GCSE and BTEC qualifications (see the appendix for a full breakdown of these results).

In an effort to cut to the bone of what motivates the choice of BTEC qualifications, learners were also asked to specify the single most important reason for their choice of the BTEC. Again, the particular learning style of the BTEC is something that is mentioned by a considerable proportion, particularly National Diploma learners (and to a lesser extent, First Certificate learners). The relevance vis-à-vis future employment of the BTEC is referenced as a driver mostly amongst National Certificate learners, but still remains a major factor at the overall level.

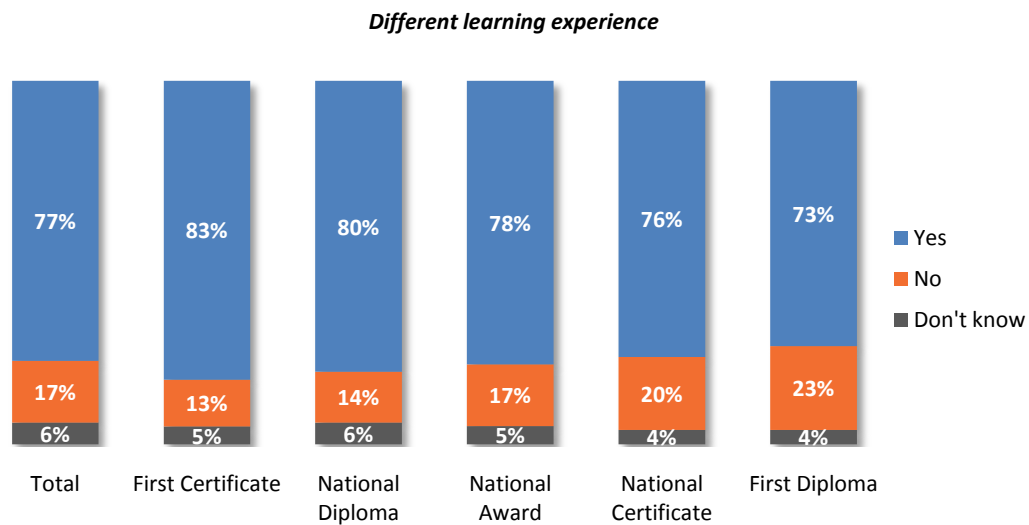
Whilst this does not differ significantly across the qualification groups, it is further indicated that BTEC qualifications provide an opportunity for those who may not have other options available to achieve qualifications in a given area. Looking lastly at Level 2 learners, it is again the case that the ability to combine GCSE and BTEC First studies weighs more heavily, whereas National Award learners particularly emphasise the need for combining A-Levels with a BTEC National qualification.

	Total	Nat Dip	First Dip	Nat Cert	Nat Award	First Cert
Base	n=352	n=150	n=112	n=45	n=39	n=38
It had different learning style	17%	24%	13%	9%	15%	21%
The BTEC was more relevant to the job I want to be doing	16%	15%	10%	24%	10%	8%
The BTEC was my only option for getting a qualification in this area	12%	10%	13%	4%	5%	8%
I wanted to combine GCSE with a BTEC First qualification	12%	5%	29%	9%	5%	39%
I wanted to combine A-Levels with a BTEC National qualification	11%	13%	4%	11%	38%	0%
I wanted to learn more about a subject I was interested in	6%	5%	7%	11%	5%	5%
I thought the BTEC looked more interesting than courses I looked at	5%	7%	3%	4%	3%	0%
I considered it the best preparation for further studies	3%	4%	1%	2%	5%	5%
I needed a qualifications in a specific subject to get into university	3%	5%	2%	2%	0%	3%
I wanted a different learning experience	3%	3%	4%	0%	0%	3%
I wanted to be treated as an adult	3%	1%	4%	7%	3%	0%
I considered the BTEC a better way of studying because it provides a practical, real-world approach to learning	2%	2%	1%	2%	3%	3%
I thought that the BTEC would be better suited to someone like me	2%	2%	4%	0%	0%	0%
I wanted an alternative to A levels/GCSEs	2%	1%	2%	7%	0%	3%
Wanted a qual. that combines practical & theoretical knowledge	1%	1%	0%	2%	5%	3%
It was more likely than other qualifications to help me get a job	1%	1%	2%	2%	0%	0%
I needed a qualifications in a specific subject to get into college	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Other	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%	0%

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Given the emphasis on this already in terms of motivating the choice of BTEC qualifications, it comes as little surprise that a vast majority of learners acknowledged that BTEC studies constitute a different learning experience in comparison to other qualifications studied for.

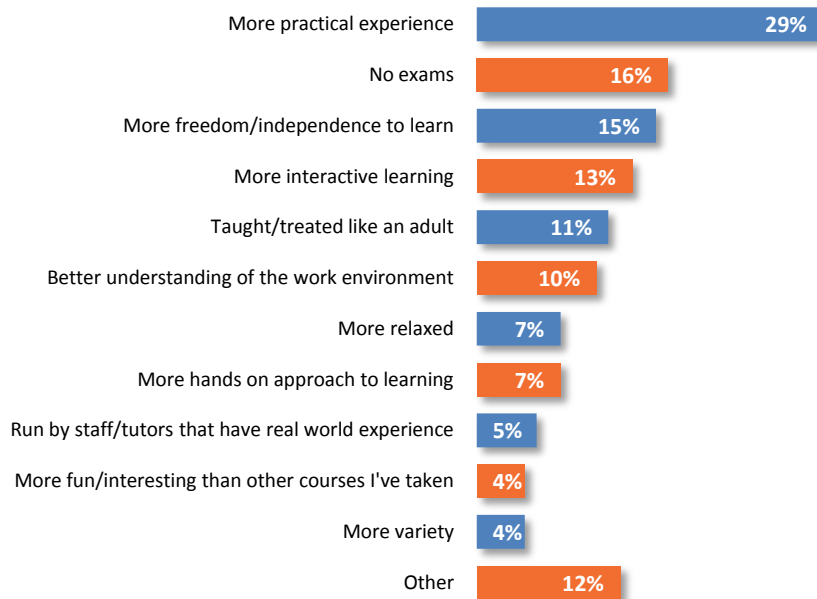
Although the prevalence of young learners within the First Certificate qualification group would suggest that these might have less ground for comparison (having had relatively less exposure to the educational system), they are nonetheless marginally more likely to consider the BTEC learning experience different. However, as can be seen below, this applies across the board.



Base: all respondents (n=367), all ND (n=152), FD (n=117), NC (n=50), NA (n=41), FC (n=40)

Upon being asked to specify how BTEC studies differ from other qualifications studied for, considerable emphasis is placed on the practical nature of BTECs studied. The absence of exams is recognised by a substantial proportion of learners alongside the more independent, interactive learning style.

Different learning experience: how different



Base: all respondents who said the BTEC was a different learning experience (n=283)

EXAMPLE VERBATIM RESPONSES:

"It was most of practical work and some theory. You understand it quite well and the teaching is also different because when you see what you are taught practically it's much easier to understand and learning becomes a fun."

"It was more practical/ hands on - this best suits me rather than the knowledge gathering exams."

"It was more practical, it shows how you really work in the job. It gives you more of an experience other than writing and it prepares you for the real world."

"Definitely no exams, takes the pressure off so can just spread over the coursework. Also the lecturers get more of an idea of my abilities instead of a certain percentage from an exam at the end of the year. Also very relaxed and a nice environment to learn because everyone is relaxed which made it more friendly."

"I thought the learning experience was more suited to my needs as I cannot deal with exams and find it difficult to revise but BTEC gave you the chance to learn and then complete assessments in good time, not having to go away from it then be thrown back into forgetting everything."

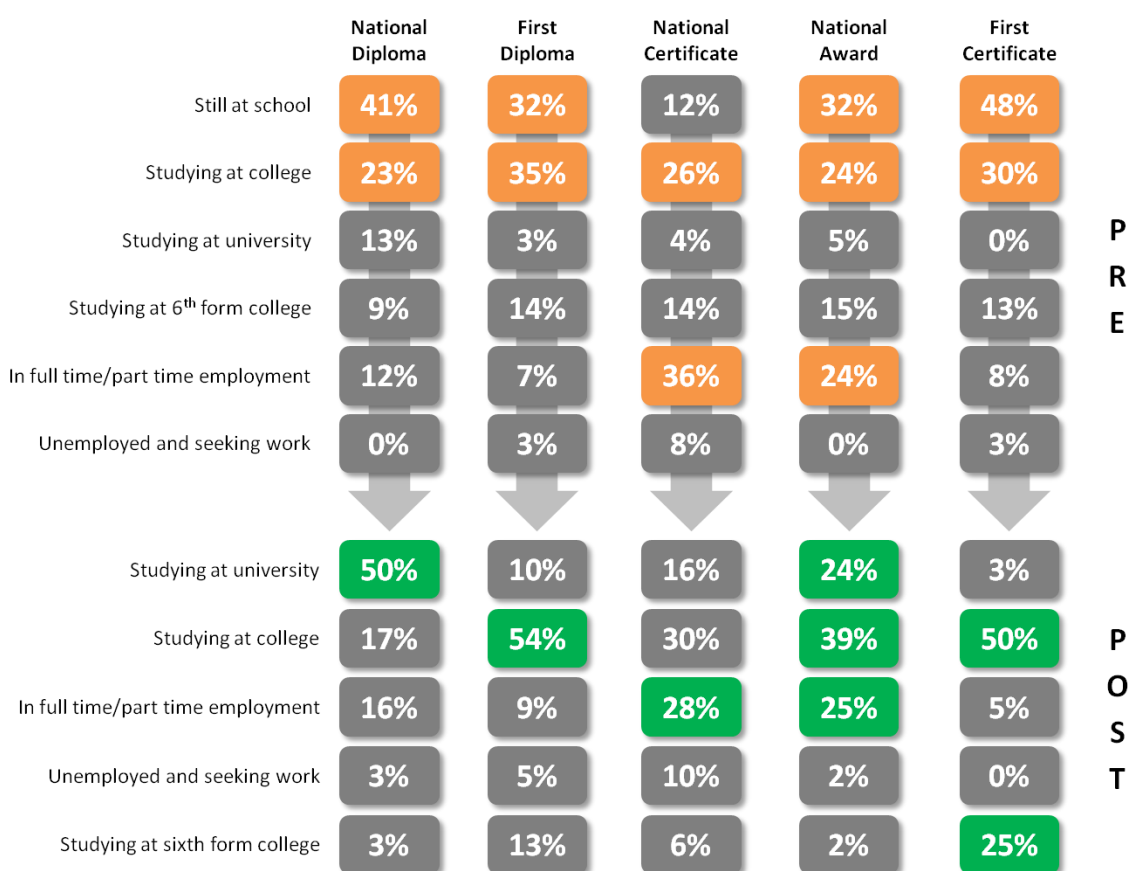
"I was given more of a chance to experiment and find out the ways in which I work best, which then made it easier to know what I was going to do in the next stage of my life."

PROGRESSION

A straightforward comparison of main activities pre to post BTEC studies gives a good first indication of the very tangible value BTEC qualifications bring about for learners. Looking at the broad progression patterns within National Diploma learners, for example, the migration from being at school or college to studies at university strongly suggests that the BTEC qualification gained constitutes value in as much as it helps learners qualify for further studies.

Similarly, looking at progression within Level 2, the migration from school to college or sixth form studies provides a further indication that both First Diploma and First Certificate learners progress at least partly enabled by their BTEC qualification.

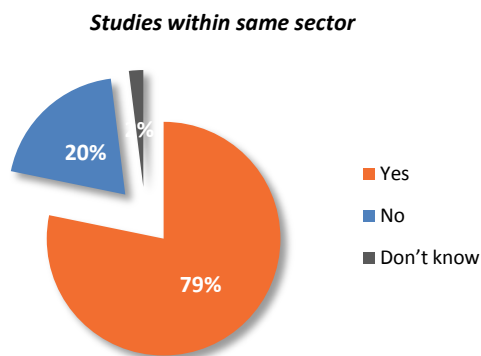
National Certificate and National Award learners are interesting in this context because they are most likely to have come from employment, meaning that their subsequent employment cannot simply be attributed to their recently completed BTEC qualifications. Leaving aside those now studying at university who clearly progressed, this could be read as an indication of progression within employment.



Base: all respondents (n=367), all ND (n=152), FD (n=117), NC (n=50), NA (n=41), FC (n=40)

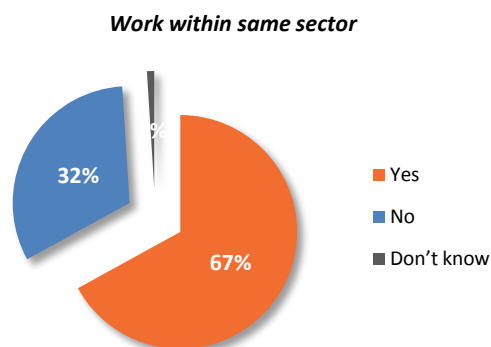
IMPACT OF BTEC

To further explore whether BTEC qualifications are part of a longer term career plan or merely a tick in the box to achieve entry into further education or employment, those who progressed were asked to indicate whether the subject they are now engaged in relates to the subject studied at the BTEC level. For those who progressed to further studies, it is perhaps unsurprising given the considerable emphasis on interest as a motivational factor identified earlier that four in five current students indicate that they are studying within the same sector area. Within the relatively small proportion that changed sector area when progressing to further studies, the majority invoke a change of plan or, merely, having become interested in another subject area as explanations for the change of heart.



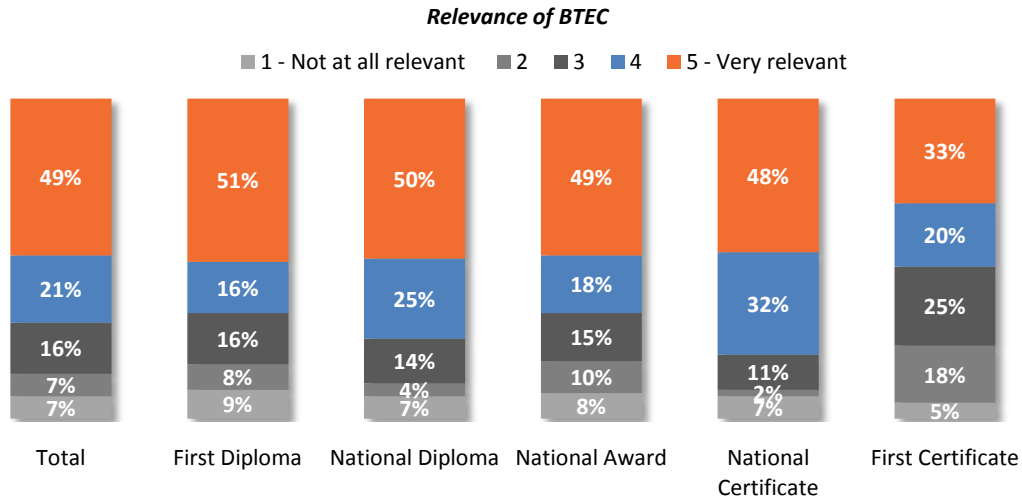
Base: all respondents who are currently studying (n=256)

An exercise identical to the one described above was carried out for those who are currently working or on an apprenticeship, this time with a view to gauging whether jobs were achieved within the same sector area. Here, BTEC qualifications were found to be similarly relevant to current activities, with about two in three working within the same sector area. The minority who moved beyond sector areas indicated difficulties in finding a job within the same sector or the BTEC course being completed in connection with a hobby.



Base: all respondents who are currently working (n=82)

Given the continuity from BTEC studies through to either further studies or employment, it is relatively unsurprising that BTEC qualifications tend to be considered relevant vis-à-vis current activities. This is particularly the case among learners who achieved Level 3 qualifications, although First Diploma students are as likely to deem their BTEC relevant to current activities. Relevance is less strongly felt amongst First Certificate learners, although a large proportion of these remain undecided about this.



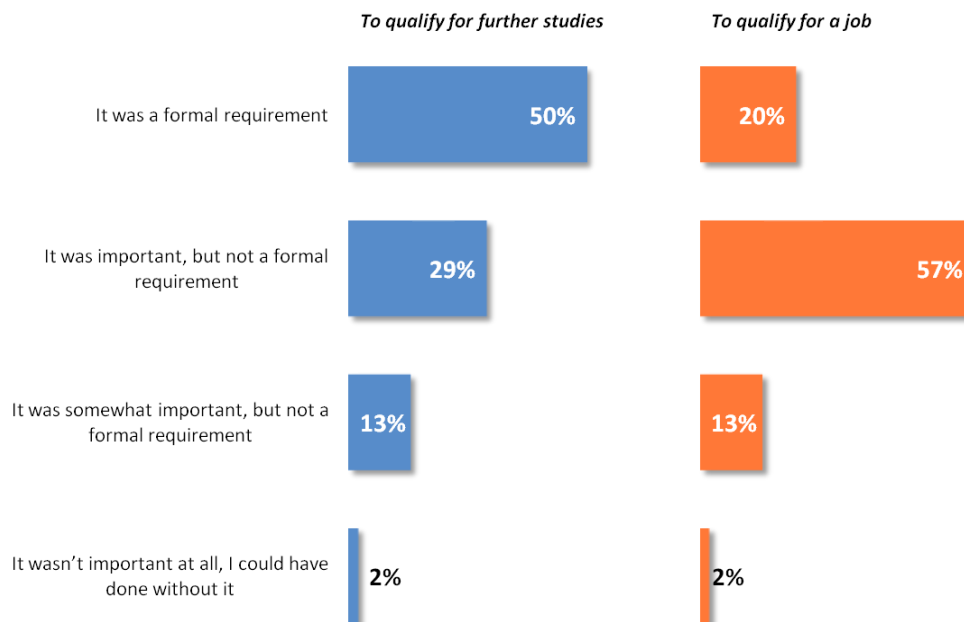
Base: all respondents (n=367), all ND (n=152), FD (n=117), NC (n=50), NA (n=41), FC (n=40)

Base: all respondents (n=367)

IMPORTANCE & BENEFITS OF BTEC

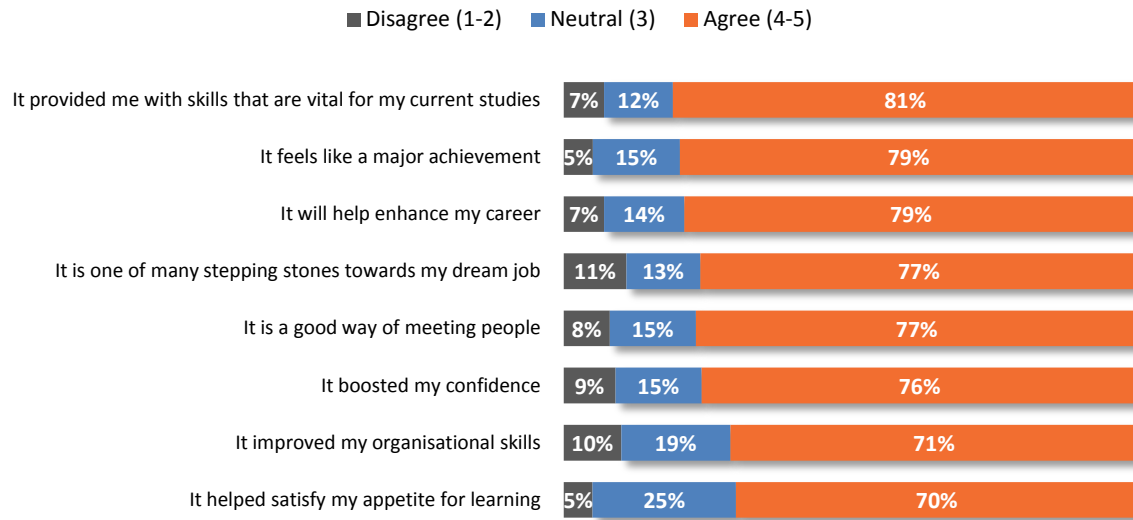
Whilst it has already been established that BTEC qualifications are often combined with other qualifications – the implicit assumption being that progression in such cases cannot be attributed to the BTEC qualification alone – an attempt was made in stage 2 to probe further around the actual weight of BTEC qualifications as a driver of progression.

Splitting this by learners who needed the BTEC qualification to gain access to further studies versus employment, it is clearly indicated that BTEC qualifications play a significant role in bringing about progression, particularly progression to further studies (First and National Diploma learners being most likely to reference the BTEC being a formal requirement). Perhaps understandably, BTEC qualifications are less likely to be a formal requirement amongst learners who progress to employment.



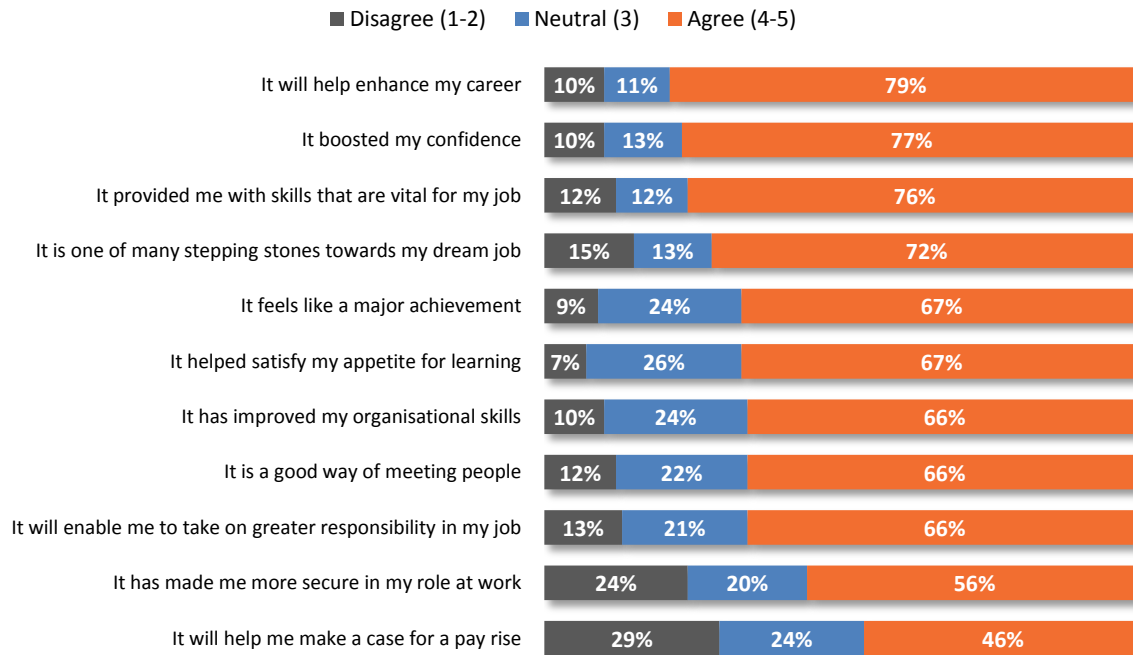
Base: all respondents who needed the BTEC to qualify for further studies (n=215), work (n=46)

Depending on whether respondents progressed to employment or further studies, follow-up questions were employed to identify the benefits they derived from their BTEC studies. For those who progressed to further studies, the vast majority agree that the BTEC provided vital skills relative to their current studies. Within this group, BTEC qualifications are also widely perceived as a career enhancing move and acknowledged as a major achievement. On the other hand, a large proportion of learners recognise it as merely one stepping stone on the road towards a dream job.



Base: all respondents who are currently studying (n=256)

Learners who progressed to employment also recognise the BTEC qualification as a career enhancing move, which equipped them with skills that are vital for their current job. ‘Softer’ effects such as boosted confidence and a sense of achievement are also recognised within this group alongside the recognition that the BTEC qualification may be one of many stepping stones towards a dream job.



Base: all respondents who are currently working (n=82)

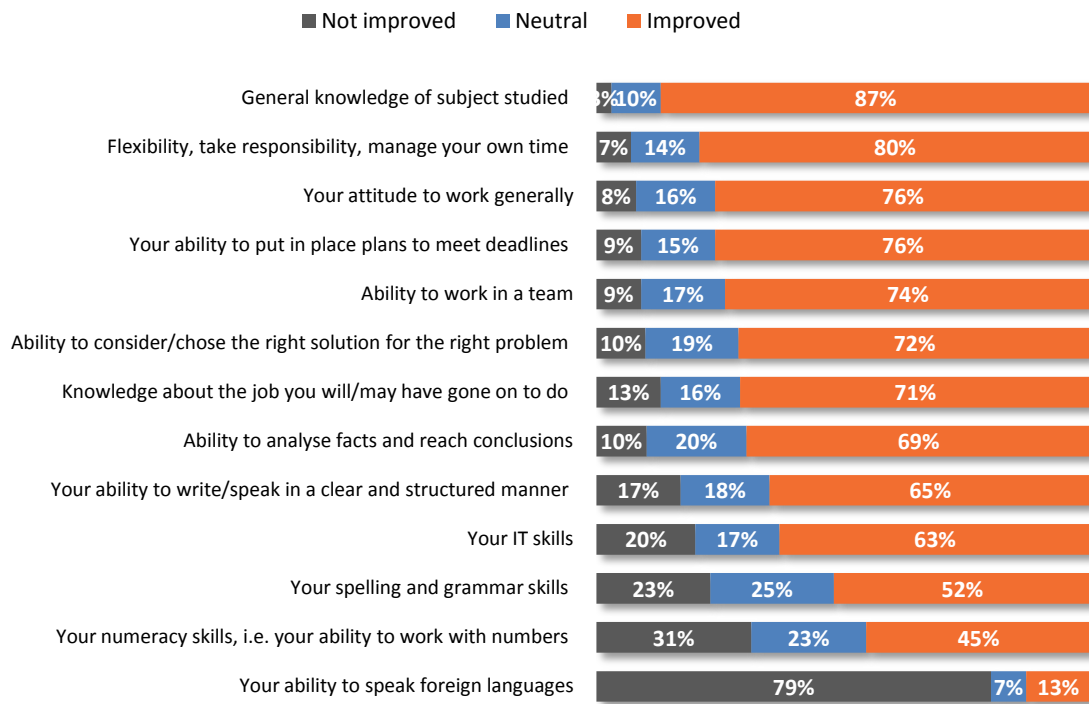
CBI & HIGHER EDUCATION SKILLS

In response to a survey conducted by the CBI, identifying candidate skills that businesses consider important, a question was added to gauge the extent to which BTEC qualifications deliver against these. Pragmatically, this also queried skills that have been identified as key in Higher Education. As can be seen in the overview table below, a broad range of skills ranging from softer, e.g. organisational skills, through to harder, e.g. spelling and grammar skills, were included.

	HE skills	CBI skills
General knowledge of subject studied	✓	
Your ability to analyse facts and reach conclusions based on these facts	✓	✓
Your ability to put in place plans to meet deadlines	✓	
Your ability to consider and chose the right solution for the right problem	✓	
Your IT skills		✓
Your numeracy skills, i.e. your ability to work with numbers		✓
Your ability to write and speak in a clear and structured manner	✓	✓
Your spelling and grammar skills		✓
Your ability to work in a team		✓
Your willingness to be flexible, take responsibility, manage own time and meet deadlines		✓
Your ability to speak foreign languages		✓
Your knowledge about the job you will or may already have gone on to do		✓
Your attitude to work generally		

As a whole, it is clear that learners perceive that their BTEC studies have improved their skills across the board – the only exception being ability to speak foreign languages. There is, however, an indication that BTEC qualifications work relatively harder at improving ‘softer’ skills, including willingness to take responsibility, general attitude to work, deadline management and ability to work in a team. Looking specifically at the skills highlighted as important by the CBI, BTEC qualifications deliver relatively less well against IT, numeracy, spelling / grammar and languages skills. On the other hand it should not be ignored that the most improved area is the general knowledge of the subject studied.

Looking at improvements within individual qualification groups unveils few significant differences. IT skills are slightly more likely to have improved amongst First Diploma and National Diploma learners. Numeracy improved slightly more amongst National Certificate learners; reference the large proportion of these who studied Engineering. Lastly, there is an indication that First Diploma learners made the largest gains in terms of team work skills.



Base: all respondents (n=367)

To better separate most improved from least improved skills, learners were subsequently asked to specify the three skills they thought had improved the most vs. the three that had improved the least during their BTEC studies. This broadly identified the same hierarchy alluded to above, i.e. that BTEC qualifications disproportionately improve 'softer' as opposed to 'harder' skills such as IT, numeracy and particularly foreign language skills.

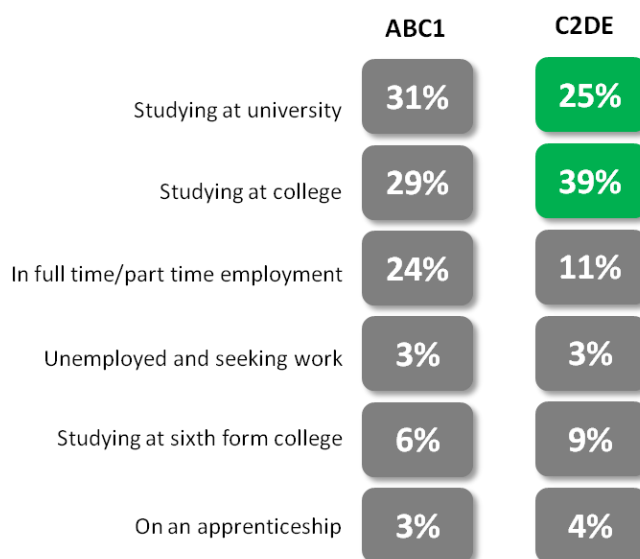
SOCIAL MOBILITY

In an effort to establish whether BTEC qualifications enable social mobility, learners were asked to provide details on their parents' employment (allowing for socio-economic classification), with a view to analysing progression patterns amongst learners from a variety of backgrounds.

Whilst it is important to keep in mind here that progression cannot be attributed to BTEC qualifications alone, reference the significant proportion of learners who completed other qualifications alongside their BTEC, there is evidence to suggest that BTEC qualifications contribute to social mobility amongst learners from a C2DE background.

Whilst social mobility amongst learners from an ABC1 background is difficult to pinpoint, the proportion of university students from a C2DE background does suggest that BTEC qualifications can deliver social mobility effects. Even if university studies are not necessarily a direct route to AB classification, such qualifications are often a prerequisite for employment that would merit ABC1 classification.

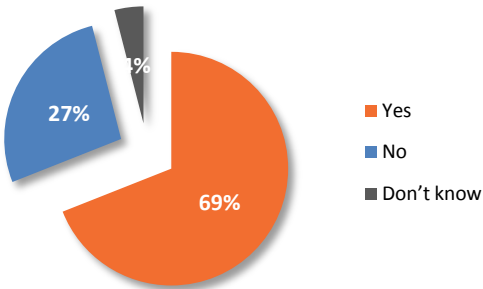
Current university students from a C2DE background can therefore be considered the 'low hanging fruit', i.e. the group that is closest to progressing in social mobility terms. Although clearly further into the future, the same effect cannot be ruled out amongst current college learners, who may or may not be en route to further studies at university level.



Base: all respondents currently studying at University, ABC1 (n=49), C2DE (n=45)

Keeping in mind the caveat that university education does not in itself guarantee an upward 'jump' in socio-economic classification, the substantial proportion of learners from a C2DE background who state that they are first in their family to be studying at University provides further evidence that BTEC qualifications enable or at least contribute to social mobility. Unsurprisingly, learners from a C2DE background are significantly more likely to be the first in their family to study at University.

First in family to study at University: C2DEs

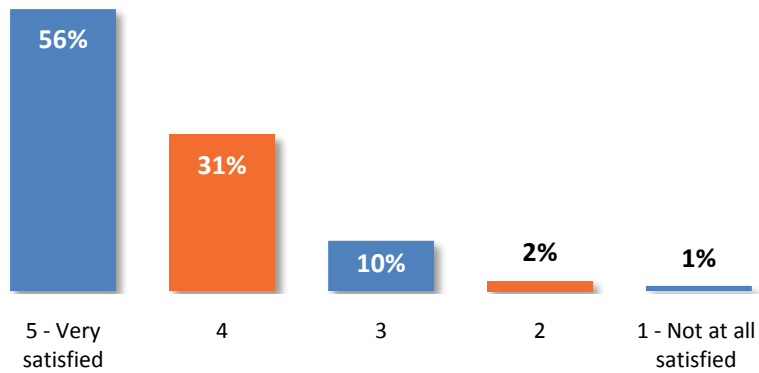


Base: all respondents currently studying at University (n=98)

SATISFACTION

In regards to satisfaction with the BTEC course just completed, it is clear from the below that BTEC learners are very satisfied overall and looking at this within qualification sub-groups unveils no significant differences.

Satisfaction with BTEC



NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

During the course of the project, Edexcel expressed an interest in gauging the extent to which online as opposed to computer aided telephone interviewing is capable of providing detailed feedback to open ended questions, the underlying hypothesis being that telephone interviews would elicit more detail relative to online self completion.

A robust exploration of this would require analysis and comparison between similarly composed groups, e.g. same gender, age and qualification structure within sub-samples. However, as the telephone interviewing option was mainly employed – successfully so – as a means of chasing respondents who did not respond to the online survey invites, the two samples differ significantly in said terms, i.e. telephone interviews skewed significantly younger and therefore significantly more likely to have completed Level 2 qualifications. Had sample sizes, particularly for the telephone sample, been larger, the effect on such skews could have been addressed through isolation of and analysis within more homogeneous groups.

A robust quantitative exploration is, in other words, beyond this study, but it is nonetheless possible to draw some qualitative conclusions, although differences related to sample composition need to be kept in mind. Taking question 11b, which probes how exactly BTEC learning differs from other learning experiences, as an example, the average word count for learners who completed the survey online was 27, whereas those who were interviewed telephonically gave answers averaging around 32. It is thus indicated that the telephone methodology elicits slightly richer responses relative to online, although the overarching conclusion here must be that both yielded very detailed feedback.

APPENDIX

Q10b – Reasons for choosing BTEC	Total	National Diploma	First Diploma	National Certificate	National Award	First Certificate
<i>Base</i>	<i>n=352</i>	<i>n=150</i>	<i>n=112</i>	<i>n=45</i>	<i>n=39</i>	<i>n=38</i>
I wanted to learn more about a subject I was interested in	57%	55%	66%	47%	64%	50%
I considered the BTEC a better way of studying because it provides a practical, real-world approach to learning	53%	54%	56%	44%	62%	58%
I wanted a qualification that combines practical and theoretical knowledge	50%	49%	52%	47%	67%	39%
I thought that the BTEC would be better suited to someone like me	48%	50%	53%	38%	46%	42%
The BTEC was more relevant to the job I want to be doing than other qualifications	43%	41%	45%	38%	44%	29%
I considered it the best preparation for further studies	41%	41%	45%	36%	44%	45%
I thought the BTEC looked more interesting than courses I looked at	41%	41%	46%	27%	44%	47%
I wanted a different learning experience	36%	33%	43%	13%	44%	34%
It had different learning style	35%	37%	42%	16%	46%	42%
I wanted an alternative to A levels/GCSEs	32%	35%	38%	27%	36%	39%
I wanted to be treated as an adult	31%	29%	33%	18%	41%	32%
I needed a qualification / qualifications in a specific subject to get into university	30%	39%	29%	18%	28%	13%
It was more likely than other qualifications to help me get a job	27%	25%	33%	29%	26%	26%
The BTEC was my only option for getting a qualification in this area	19%	16%	25%	7%	15%	21%
I wanted to combine GCSE with a BTEC First qualification	14%	7%	33%	9%	8%	39%
I needed a qualification / qualifications in a specific subject to get into college	12%	11%	14%	9%	8%	16%
I wanted to combine A-Levels with a BTEC National qualification	11%	13%	4%	11%	38%	0%
Other (please specify)	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%	0%