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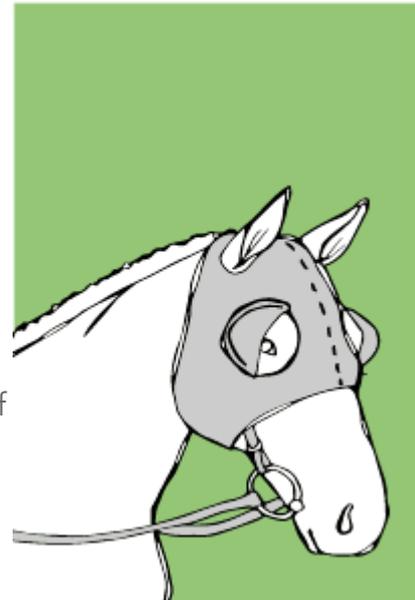
## Eight things you need to know about BTEC

22-07-2016

### Have you got your blinkers on?

Plenty of people still believe the clichés about BTECs - the old 'A-levels are better' argument is one that never seems to go away.

But is there any truth to it? The stats would suggest it's a good idea to take those blinkers off. Last year, 24% of the students who started university had a BTEC. That's compared with 18% back in 2010 and it's a ratio that's risen consistently since 2008.



BTEC qualifications also represent a route into a first job. BTECs are recognised in more than 100 countries and, since the qualifications were developed with different industries, many of the skills you learn are tailored to the workplace.

So, is a BTEC right for you? To help you answer that question, we've taken a look at some of the common questions and preconceptions around BTEC.

### Do universities prefer other qualifications, such as A-levels or IB, rather than BTEC?

The short answer to this one is 'no'. Of course, the qualifications you'll need will depend on the course and the uni that's running it. But most unis will accept BTEC alongside other qualifications and that includes the Russell Group unis – even Oxford and Cambridge.

"At Herts University we are committed to offering places to students on their academic achievements and the grades they have achieved," says Penny Carey, associate dean, School of Law at the University of Hertfordshire.



"We certainly don't favour one qualification above another and will always consider a student's application in its entirety; academic achievement, grades, work experience, skillset and extra curricular activity."

"The different areas of study you undertook for your BTEC qualification can be of value to the course to which you are applying and the best way to illustrate the skills you have developed is via your personal statement."

### **OK, so what kind of BTEC do I need to get into uni?**

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This depends very much on the uni - you'll need to check with them to see exactly what BTEC is required.

Some courses, vocational in particular, will prefer the skills that students with BTEC qualifications have developed. Others may require at least one or two A-levels to accompany an applicant's BTEC qualification.

Entry requirements will be advertised on the course pages of universities' websites. However, you can also email your chosen university's admissions team to find out if your particular BTEC would be accepted.

As a rough guide, Level 1 and 2 BTECs are the equivalent of GCSEs, while Level 3 is

the equivalent of A-level. Once you get to Levels 4 and above, you're looking at qualifications that are equivalent to degrees. Level 5 is equivalent to a foundation degree, while Level 7 is equivalent to a Master's.

BTECs are rated on pass, merit and distinction. Getting a triple distinction at BTEC Level 3 is the equivalent of 3 A grades at A-Level and 360 UCAS points.

**I have heard BTECS are easy in comparison to A-Levels, does that mean I have a better chance of getting into a more prestigious university?**

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BTECS are typically more vocational than A-levels, which tend to be more academic. But that doesn't mean they are the easy option - or that they will increase your chances of getting into a high-ranking university.



"It was once the case that BTECs were viewed as the low-level education option but that isn't true at all now," says Carey. "They are respected qualifications and, just like A-levels, some will be harder than others."

"Just because you opt for BTEC doesn't mean you will get an easier ride. Hard work and meeting the criteria of the university you apply to are the most important things."

**Why do students choose BTEC qualification?**

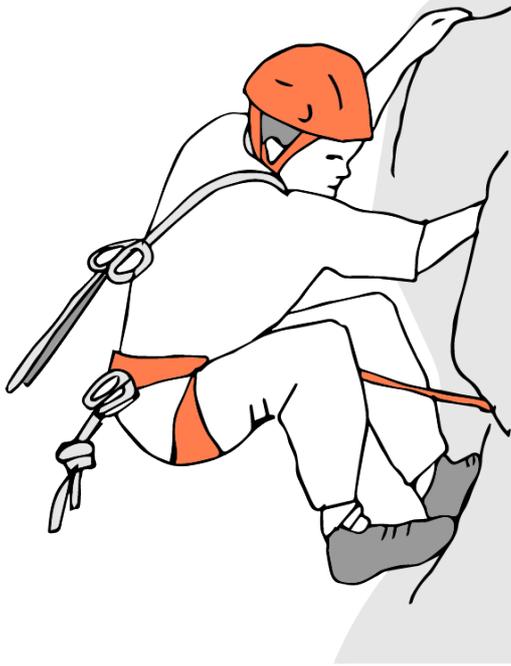
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You might choose to do a BTEC because you want to gain practical knowledge and employability skills.

It could help you into employment, because it equips you with the skills that are attractive to employers straight away.

### How easy is it to study a BTEC qualification alongside other qualifications?

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There's nothing to stop you studying for other qualifications alongside a BTEC. But BTECs on their own can be quite intensive and you might find you simply don't have the capacity to devote to more than one qualification at a time.

Remember many BTECs are the equivalent of three A-levels or a foundation degree at university so there is plenty of work involved in studying for them.

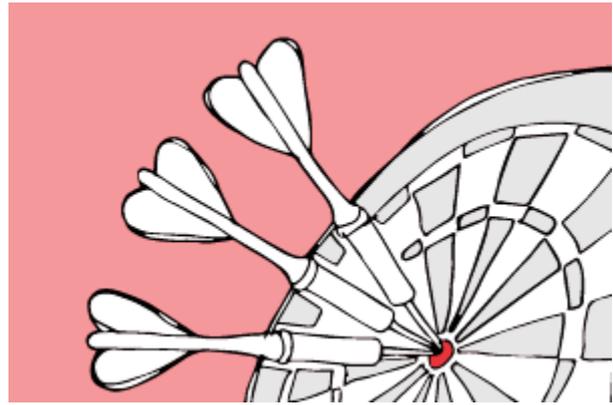
"If you want to get top marks it's probably best to concentrate on one qualification and give it your best shot," says Carey. You don't want to spread yourself too thin and then fail to get the grades you want in any of them."

### Do students who do BTEC struggle with uni more than students with other qualifications?

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The portfolio-based nature of BTEC courses is very similar to that of a degree and students are generally already adept at independent studying.

A 2013 study by London Economics found that almost 79% of BTEC students graduate with a first or second class degree.



Naturally, some of the skills you learn on BTEC will be really useful on a degree course, namely time management and organisational skills. You will also have other work-based experience and practical skills that A-Level students may not have.

### **Are there particular uni courses that suit BTEC qualification?**

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Because of their vocational nature, BTECs are well-suited to degrees where you have a strong practical element. You will already have done a lot of hands-on training as part of a BTEC and less classroom-based and exam study so a course where you get out and about more might be ideal.

However, BTEC students adapt well to the rigours of university and just because you studied hospitality and catering at BTEC doesn't mean you are stuck with having to follow that subject at uni either.

Like A-level students, you can do one subject at college then change to another as you embark on study at a higher level.

### **I'm worried about getting a job after uni, do employers like BTEC?**

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BTECs were developed in partnership with industry and because of this there is emphasis on workplace skills. Your BTEC will have given you a great foundation and practical skills which employers are always on the lookout for. Couple that with a relevant degree and you'll find your employability is pretty high.

According to Pearson, the global education company runs BTEC, 90% of graduates

who went to uni after BTEC are employed full-time and 37% of businesses prefer recruits to hold a mix of academic and vocational qualifications. It's fair to say BTEC could give you a significant headstart.

<http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/content.php?r=26003-Don%E2%80%99t-waste-a-university-open-day-trip-%E2%80%93-five-things-you-should-do-to-make-the-most-of-your-visit>

## Don't waste a university open day trip – five things you should do to make the most of your visit

*Sponsored feature*

All universities hold open days to give students applying through UCAS the chance to see at first hand what they are like.

Naturally, universities will want to show you the best bits because they want you to study there. Accommodation will be clean and tidy, the Student's Union will be calm and immaculate and there will be plenty of positive stories to hear about courses and uni life.

That's not to say a university is trying to pull the wool over your eyes. They definitely aren't, they just want to present themselves in the best possible light. But an open day is your best chance to find out what a university is really like so don't waste it.

If you're going to hike halfway across the country be prepared, open your eyes and take a good look around the facilities, meet lecturers and talk to students to find out what you can expect.

Consider following these five tips from students at [Royal Holloway University](#) to get the most out of the day:

**Weigh up the atmosphere**

It might seem like an obvious thing to say but the vibe you get from a place can really be the difference between being happy or sad there. If it makes you feel good and the staff and students are welcoming, there is a good chance it will be a great place for you to study.



Max, a politics and international relations student, says: "I thought at first I wanted to study at a big city university but when I came to visit Royal Holloway, I quickly realised that it was the place I wanted to be.

"There is a real warmth on campus – everyone knows each other, you get so much one-to-one time with your lecturers and the whole campus feels big enough to always be interesting but close enough to always feel welcoming."

### **Check out the tutors before you go and quiz them about the course**

Tutors and lecturers will be the best people to tell you about the nuts and bolts of the course you want to study. Ask them about what grades you need, how do they select the candidates and what they look for in a personal statement.

Go prepared and think of some questions that aren't already in the prospectus. It's your chance to grill lecturers about what exactly you will be doing for the next three/four years. Lecturers are interesting people and by asking a few inquisitive questions you may well find out stuff which fuels your own enthusiasm for the subject.

History student Joe says:

"The important thing for me was getting the course right, as this is what I would have to study for three years. I was always really interested in the First Crusade, and at the open day I learned that one of the books I was using for my A Level coursework was written by the lecturer. He also told me the modules were a perfect mix of ancient, medieval and modern history, which cemented my choice."

## Approach a random student on campus

There will be lots of student ambassadors offering helpful advice during an open day but don't be afraid to approach other students on campus for a real-life student view. Chances are their answers will give you a different perspective and be less open day-oriented.



Ask them what they consider the good and bad bits are, which halls of residence have a good/bad reputation and what the city you are planning to study in is like.

If you can find someone studying the course you are looking at, then that's even better. They will be able to tell which parts they have liked and which have been less favourable.

## Try and get a look at several different halls of residence

Most universities will open up their halls of residence for you to look around on their open days. But of course, these will be the cleaned up, spruced up best version of the accommodation on offer. If you can sneak a peek at other halls of residence then great, if not then make sure you ask lots of questions.

Are uni halls open to all first years? What is the cost and what is included? Are they self-catered or catered? How big are the rooms? Is there any broadband? What is security like? These are all questions you should be asking the open day ambassadors.

## Leave your parents at home (or at least wander around on your own during the open day)

University may well be the first time you have ever lived away from home and you might want to start by giving the open days a go on your own, travelling up and down the country and gathering the information you need for yourself.

That said, parents will probably want to take a look too and if they do come along, make sure you take a look around on your own. We all know what parents can be like and you might not get a chance to ask anything at all. Step out on your own and find out about the things that will matter to you.

<http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/content.php?r=26001-Fusion-Students-%E2%80%93-the-changing-face-of-student-accommodation>

## Fusion Students – the changing face of student accommodation

*Last updated 17-08-2016*

Urban legends abound about the sorry state of student digs – mouldy bathrooms, washing piled in sinks, unscrupulous landlords and horrible housemates. Everyone who has ever been to university has a story or at least knows someone who has suffered some kind of housing disaster. It was almost a right of passage for any self-respecting university student and to be honest, it stayed that way for a long time. But times are definitely changing.

Imagine accommodation with drinking rooms Pre-drinking bars, cinema rooms, gyms, fitness suites, stylish furnishings and a 24-hour concierge. Visualise a beautifully-designed space where you can meet like-minded individuals and sip a cocktail or enjoy a beer after your lectures. Perhaps you'd like to book a private room for pre-going out drinks, then relax there when you return home after a night on the town? It sounds a bit like one of those beer adverts, "if Heineken did halls of residence..." but it actually is the future of student accommodation.

Companies are springing up which have realised that students do actually have standards. They have cast aside outdated and unfair student stereotypes and instead see students as young, enthusiastic adults who want somewhere pleasant where they can not only socialise and meet other students, but that is a comfortable place to study too.



University education has changed dramatically over the last decade with the introduction of student tuition fees. Long gone are the days of grants and endless drinking, students are having to make a serious investment in their education and as such they expect far more from their accommodation.

That is where these new student pads really deliver. Many are based in the heart of large city centres, providing access, not only to fantastic living facilities, but all the cities have to offer as well.

Warren Rosenberg, of [Fusion Students](#), which has residences in Cardiff, Bristol, Newcastle and Nottingham, says: "It used to be the case that students would get a room in halls of residence for their first year and then move into private accommodation with their mates as fast as humanly possible for the remainder of their degree.



"But a three-year degree is almost the norm now. Increasingly, students are staying for four, five or even six years and they expect more for their money.

"What we do is very different from your average residence and students are opting to stay with us throughout their entire university experience. We offer them affordable luxury, so when they are studying away from home they really can make the most of it."

And why indeed would you want to leave given the facilities available? Fusion Students offers high spec studio and two-dio rooms with flat screen TVs, double beds and stylish communal areas. The social spaces are well thought out to allow you to mingle and make friends, with games rooms and VIP bars. In addition, there are private gyms, party lounges, a concierge service, study rooms, 24-hour security and Wi-Fi throughout.

Students are certainly expecting more from their accommodation, but this change has also been brought about by fiercer struggles in the workplace too. Competition for jobs is tougher than ever and students are realising the importance of staying on in education and completing post-graduate diplomas, masters and PhDs.

If you're embarking on a postgraduate course, you'll probably want to do it in relative comfort, having served your time in traditional student digs as an undergraduate. There are also more opportunities for foreign students to study in the UK than ever before and living in such accommodation with permanent security offers parents, who are thousands of miles away, peace of mind.



Rosenberg says: "Increasingly, students are undertaking postgraduate study and we have a lot of residents who fit into this category. Whilst the idea of further study is appealing to get you onto that all-important career ladder, the thought of living in undesirable accommodation for another few years really isn't.