



ASSOCIATION
OF COLLEGES

Btec students into HE, an FE perspective



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The big question

The shelf life of applied generals

- The lifespan of level 3 qualifications which are not A levels is currently in question.
- T level implementation is due to be rolled out in 2020
- T level: level 3 qualification with direct entry to workplace
- Currently no plans to attach UCAS point
- Applied general may be phased out as T levels are introduced

So the big question...

- Why aren't recruiting universities more worried about this?
- Even with UCAS point attached (if lobbying manages to achieve this) routes are too specialist and practical to transfer skills and knowledge to any degree without the same specialism
- AGQ students account for 28% of HE applications: can you afford to lose this proportion of the market?

The Qualification quality question

Why does a student choose a Btec over A levels?

- Sometimes there is no choice: they don't meet entry requirements for A level, Btec is their only option.
- A 're-sit' year at level 2, doesn't usually offer GCSE's beyond English and maths: if you need to redo level 2, you can't progress to A levels
- For some students the thought of the exams associated with A levels is too off-putting
- For others, they know what industry they want to work in and want to focus more specifically than A levels will allow.

Btec and consistency

- Choice of pathways
- Choice of units
- Driven by delivery staff

- Some students are better prepared for HE than A level students
- Yet the reputation remains an issue because of the consistency of delivery and assessment
- Views based on stereotypes of the weakest Btec students are prevalent
- Many Russell group universities select based on GCSE grades: the excludes many Btec students, regardless of their progress at level 3

A levels

- Has more prescriptive assessment measures (but consistency can vary between awarding organisations)
- Can be an excellent metric of a student's ability to retain and apply knowledge
- Can also just measure how well a school or college can prepare a young person for an exam
- Are pretty exclusive: most institutions won't offer A levels to anyone 18 or over

And..

- So the solution to improve the consistency of Btec is to move to from the qualification credit framework(QCF) to the regulated qualification framework (RQF)

....right?

**Why are so many colleges hanging
onto QCF?**

Simple answers...

- RQF Awarding Organisations have chosen to put in externally examined units to increase rigour
- Many students on Btec courses have either been pushed down a Btec route because their GCSE results dictate it or have actively chosen a Btec because exams are a barrier to success
- There is a disconnect between preparing for a career and being able to pass an exam which is hard to overcome

So colleges put their students first...

- And stay with QCF as long as they can to continue to engage their students and allow them to achieve their best
- And question why exams are seen as the only rigorous assessment method and whether better moderation could be implemented to achieve the same goal.

Data collection and presentation

So, potentially

- You have a cohort of students who don't do their best in exams
- A cohort which increased in proportion significant at the ages of 19 and 20 as students who have done a level 2 year before level 3 follow behind
- And reporting is separated into students 18 and under and those over 18
- Data reporting at 19 and 20 is crucial to fully assess impact of Btec on HE success as this is where the biggest % of Btec achievement and unconditional offers converge

Practical measures

Set sensible entry requirements and stick to them

- If you are offering unconditional places
- Or
- Making an offer and then reducing it when results come out
- Or
- Not asking for skills and qualifications you know are required to succeed

It's not really surprising students don't do well when they come to you
Is this the qualification's fault?

Understand that colleges nurture

- a student will have an initial assessment and an individual learning plan to support them achieve their goals
- they will have group and individual tutorial which will help them keep on track and develop peer responsibility
- They will have the opportunity for individual interaction, explanation and support from their teachers in every lesson
- tutors notice early if students are struggling and will intervene

It's a buyer's market

- We know there are demographic dips and the SNC removal has increased competition.
- If you're going to recruit student now who wouldn't have been accepted in previous years... you need to adapt the support to enable them to succeed

Example:

- Engineering: if you know you have a problem with the maths knowledge of your Btec students:
- Do a diagnostic assessment in fresher's week
- Offer support workshops targeted to the gaps students are showing
- Direct students to workshops as a mandatory element
- Or offer a mentoring system where final year students give one to one maths support

**Understand the complexity of
colleges**

Colleges are interested in individual success and progression

- They are not just offering education for progression into HE
- They offer level 3 qualifications (often Btecs) to students who didn't achieve 5 GCSE's 9-4 and work with them to increase their value added
- They are developing young people to achieve their full potential: this maybe into work, or onto an apprenticeship rather than HE (and are measured on positive destinations)

The big question for you:

- These are often bright and talented young people, colleges have adopted a different, more individual approach to get the best out of them:

Are your expectations realistic and should you be considering how to better support these students?