

NEON Working Group - Supporting BTEC Students meeting

March 2021

Chat Feature

00:30:02 Maria-Anna NEON: Hi All!

00:30:45 Katie Osmon: Good afternoon everyone! Happy Friday!

00:32:45 Maria-Anna NEON: Happy Friday! I hope the weather near you is nicer than its here in London!

00:42:02 Amy (University of Kent): It puts an awful lot of pressure on students to know what they want to do with their career at a young age

00:43:12 Chris Bayes: Agreed. That is one of the strengths of the BTEC. It offers flexibility as a pathway into HE and employment.

00:48:22 Rebecca Foster: Has implementation of non continuation of low subscribed VTQs already begun?

00:49:57 Rebecca Foster: When looking at university admissions BTECs are the VTQ that is starting to make it way onto prospectuses if their any indication at all that because of this BTEC as the most popular VTQ is the one that is more likely to continue over Ctech, NCFE etc?

00:51:36 Alex Blower: (not a question more of a comment/idea) Could the working group produce a template letter to send to our local MP's? If each attendee went through their local constituency it could potentially have a decent reach. Might support the upcoming roundtables.

00:59:11 lynda duffy: hi sorry I have technical difficulties, tried coming in and out of meeting several times to no avail but I will persist in trying lol

00:59:39 Ria Bhatta: just to add when I mentioned the analysis of the current L3 landscape, the 558 quals at L3 (which are graded, has UCAS points, is classroom-based etc) includes relevant quals from all exam boards, which is comparable to the 540 AS/A Levels offered by the different exam boards

01:00:24 Chris Bayes: Hope you are able to access the session, Lynda. If not, the session is being recorded and you could listen again afterwards!

01:00:59 lynda duffy: thank you very much Chris

01:01:15 Maria-Anna NEON: Report: <https://www.educationopportunities.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/BTEC-report-FINAL.pdf>

01:08:52 Alex Blower: Given that the UCAS choices report launched this week highlighted that just 3% of students undertaking vocational qualifications ended up at 'higher tariff' universities last year, it's scary to think how low the numbers will drop with the removal of BTEC quals

01:10:06 Alex Blower: <https://www.ucas.com/file/435551/download?token=VUdIDVFh>
page 18

01:10:30 Ria Bhatta: link to joint exam board summary response (via FAB):
https://awarding.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Key-issues-with-the-DfEs-proposals-for-level-3-reform-1.0_for-stakeholders.pdf

01:10:33 Chris Bayes: A very good point, Alex.

01:16:13 Rebecca Foster: Surely APP targets would have to be lowered if this comes into place as less students entering HE would be through no fault of our own

01:17:41 Maria-Anna NEON: Break into small groups to discuss the key findings of the NEON report:

What impact would the removal of BTECs have on your institution?

What are your thoughts on the potential impact that removing BTECs could have on the %s of students from BAME backgrounds accessing HE?

What are your thoughts on the implementation of T Levels?

BTECs have evolved to provide a recognised pathway into HE. As the report states NEON members feel "T Levels are designed to support HE progression", what can we do not to get this message across to government

01:39:36 Alex Blower: That's a really good point - often BTEC L2 students are completely overlooked within these discussions

01:41:18 Teresa: yes absolutely

01:43:33 Dickinsk: Surely the fact there will be two cohorts of students who have been 'untested' in exam conditions - negate this 'traditional' view of assessment

01:44:07 Rebecca Foster: I agree! It is also not really based on any pedagogical research!

01:49:51 Natalie B: I'm sorry but I need to leave but thank you for a really interesting discussion.

01:50:11 Alex Blower: No worries Natalie - thanks for coming!

01:53:16 Rebecca Foster: Completely agree universities and HE providers need to mould themselves to students needs not the other way around

01:54:07 Rebecca Foster: My fear is the removal of VTQs if just showcasing that if people don't fit in with pre existing systems we will just get rid of them cause it is easier which is such a dangerous rhetoric!

01:56:00 Dickinsk: we are loosing ground gained over the last 40 years of access to HE for non-elite to gain access to University

01:56:31 Chris Bayes: Agree completely with this.

01:59:32 Rebecca Foster: What are your proportion of 18 year olds in comparison to mature students on your HE programmes?

02:02:15 Amy : Absolutely Nicky, I am doing some MA research into the impact of place and belonging. Identity is such an important thing and when you are helping students transition it's important they don't feel placeless in terms of where they are from and where they are going

02:02:37 Chris Bayes: This quote is tremendous!

02:02:40 Alex Blower: That's a great quote!

02:03:05 Chris Bayes: Spent two years arguing internally that the link it is indisputable!

02:03:40 Rebecca Foster: It is still an uphill battle to get others even WP practitioners to think so unfortunately

02:04:33 Alex Blower: It is tricky when there's such a disparity on the approach taken to BTEC students across the sector

02:05:01 Dickinsk: support is key -professionals need to take on board how they are perceived by their students and be self reflective of what they think their purpose in education is

02:05:10 Rebecca Foster: The shame is it is starting to come more in line to then possibly be completely reversed.

02:11:09 Chris Bayes: I think that it probably has more place than some of the shite I have seen. A pamphlet given to first years with the amazing title 'FAILURE - A USERS GUIDE'.

02:11:10 Amy : I think if caring doesn't have a place then you might do your job in getting students through the job but retention will be worse

02:13:24 Amy : I think where students from WP backgrounds have felt uncared for, this can be because they feel invisible. A teacher asks a question and always selects the middle-class students to answer, etc. It all builds up and has an impact

02:13:37 Rebecca Foster: I wonder if cohort size has an impact on this and the ability to spend time getting to know a student as an individual

02:14:01 Chris Bayes: Yeah, I think institutional type is a factor here.

02:14:33 Dickinsk: constantly battling with the notion that because a person is an adult it is deemed that they are whole and complete, that they are able to cope with every change/issue in their life - like their 'factory settings' should be set to 'cope' and that anything less than this is a problem

02:15:14 Chris Bayes: Some of the discourse around BTEC students in universities I have worked in has been frankly appalling.

02:15:29 Chris Bayes: appalling

02:15:46 Chris Bayes: Homogenisation etc.

02:16:30 Amy : Resilience is important but it shouldn't be about expecting students to go through extreme hardship for the sake of it and either fail or succeed

02:17:36 Chris Bayes: Agreed. Think a lot of stuff around resilience is framed in a negative context.

02:18:28 Amy : And I also think a lot of students already have resilience and don't realise their strengths here, if we can highlight this we can show them how capable they are

02:20:54 Emma -University of Chester: Thanks so much for today! Have to dash for the school run.

02:21:17 Chris Bayes: Thank you, Emma. See you soon :)

02:22:00 Alex Blower: We care about your safety in a fire Nicky!

02:22:25 Rebecca Foster: I think if the pandemic has done anything it has taught us how resilient students are!

02:23:35 Amy : Definitely Rebecca :) It's a shame that this hasn't been highlighted by the government at all, it's all about how behind they are, even though obviously as professionals we would want to support them here

02:24:35 Anne Kildunne: I have to go to another meeting - thanks to all the speakers!

02:24:59 Maria-Anna NEON: Thanks for joining us today Anne

02:31:39 Ria Bhatta: thanks Nicky - v insightful!

02:35:38 Dickinsk: We offer a range of toolkits - supporting staff to support students - specialised to particular student groups - however I feel further training in pastoral support and linked to support teams needs to be developed further

02:41:12 Teresa: Thank you Nicky - really interesting

02:41:14 Amy : It was really insightful Nicky thank you :)

02:41:24 Maria-Anna NEON: Thank you Nicky!

03:04:05 Dickinsk: Many thanks

03:07:17 Maria-Anna NEON: We are planning to focus June's meeting on the future landscape of post-16 qualification and pathways into HE. Is this something which would be of interest to colleagues across your institution?
What themes/topics would you like the Group to focus on in the June meeting and beyond?
Do you think we have the structure of meetings right? Is there anything we haven't been doing via the Working Group that you would like to feature in our meetings?
Do you have any suggestions around guest speakers or organisations who you would like to see invited to June's session or future meetings?
Over the course of the next year, do you think the Group should focus again on producing tangible – as we did with the 'Guiding Principles' publication? If so, do you have suggested themes/mediums etc?

Is there anything else you would like to see the Working Group focus on?

03:24:35 Maria-Anna NEON: Next meeting:
<https://www.educationopportunities.co.uk/events/supporting-btec-students-meeting-3/>

03:24:46 Rebecca Foster: could we post guiding principles again here or in the follow up email and also an email for people to suggest guest speakers to?

03:25:49 Maria-Anna NEON: <https://www.educationopportunities.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/A2300-Pearson-BTEC-Neon-22PG-PRF5-1.pdf>

03:25:57 James Rowland-NTU: Thank you all!

03:26:04 Dickinsk: thanks everyone

03:26:06 Teresa: Thanks all. interesting session

03:26:06 Katie Osmon (Bucks New Uni): Thanks all!
03:26:07 Ria Bhatta: thanks everyone!
03:26:09 Michael (he/him): Thank you
03:26:09 Maria-Anna NEON: Thanks Chris and everyone!
03:26:11 Richard Hall: Thanks Chris, thanks all