



# NEON – ‘SUPPORTING BTEC STUDENTS’ WORKING GROUP

9<sup>th</sup> June 2020 – Online meeting

# INTRODUCTION & AGENDA

- Why we are focusing on ‘Supporting BTEC students’
- The story so far – Work of the group to date and review of previous meetings
- Introduction to research project and signposting to practitioner survey
- Overview and discussion based around our guiding principles for ‘Supporting BTEC students’
- External presentations
- Using NEON’s website & LinkedIn Group as a depository for institution led work
- AOB, Next steps and how you can get more involved in the group

## INTRODUCTION TO NEON & 'SUPPORTING BTEC STUDENTS' WORKING GROUP

- NEON is the National Educational Opportunities Network, the professional organisation supporting those involved in Widening Access to Higher Education.
- We are all members of NEON's 'Supporting BTEC Students Working Group' - <https://www.educationopportunities.co.uk/programmes/working-groups/supporting-btec-students/>
- Chris Bayes (Lancaster University) – Group Chair
- Alex Blower (Southern Universities Network) – Group Vice Chair
- Rebecca Foster (University of East Anglia) – Group Vice Chair
- Rebecca Sykes (University of Leeds) – Group Vice Chair



# INTRODUCTIONS – BREAKOUT SPACE

# WHY BTEC STUDENTS?

# Number of BTEC students progressing to university

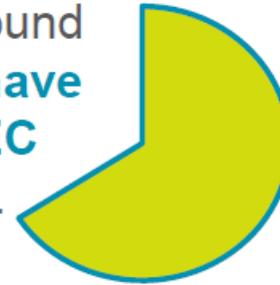
The number of students progressing to university with a BTEC increased from 13.3% in 2008 to **24.3% in 2015**



Today, around **1 in 4** students enter university having taken a BTEC National



Of those, around **two-thirds** have taken a BTEC on its own...



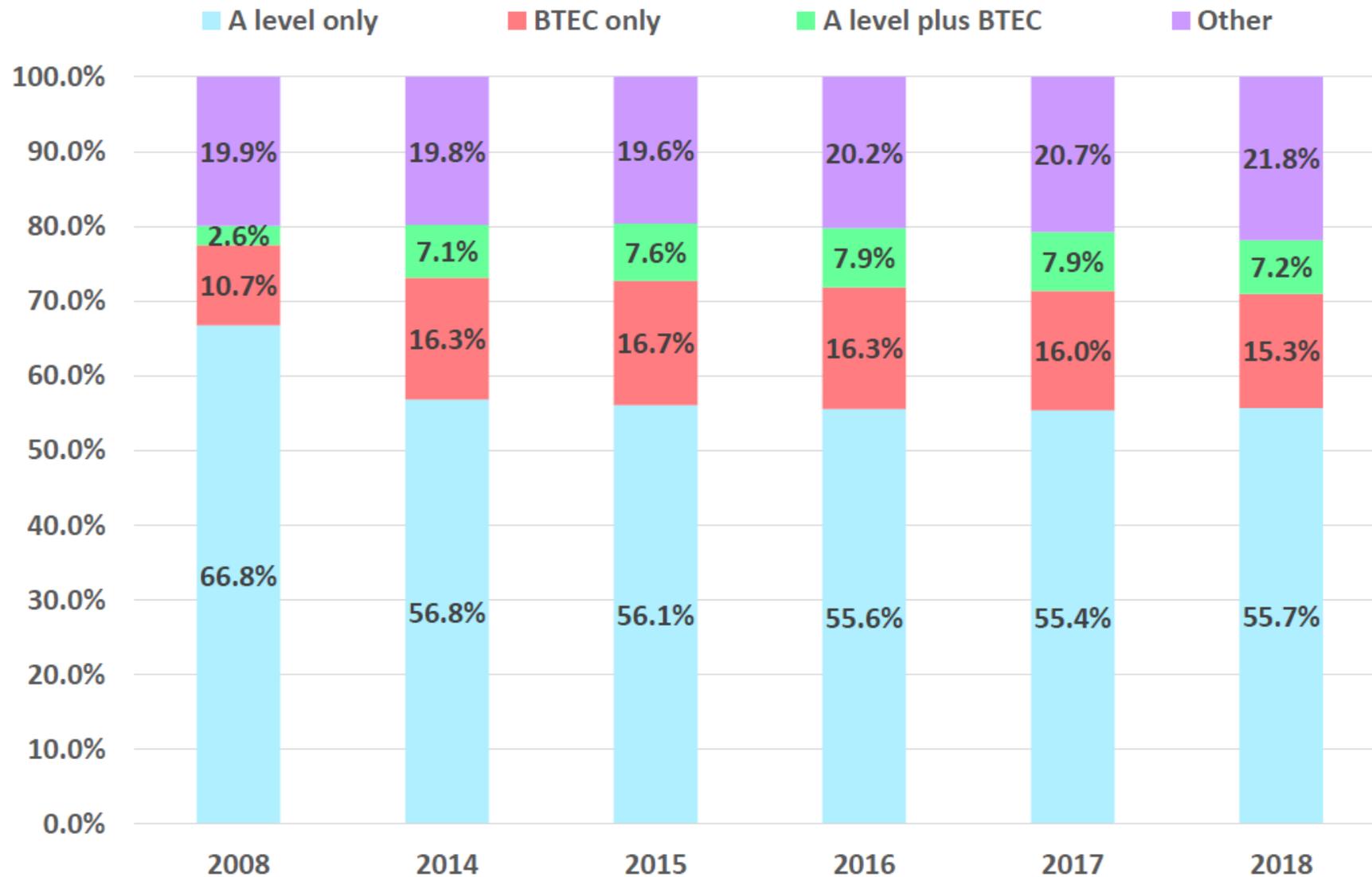
...while **one-third** have taken a BTEC alongside A levels



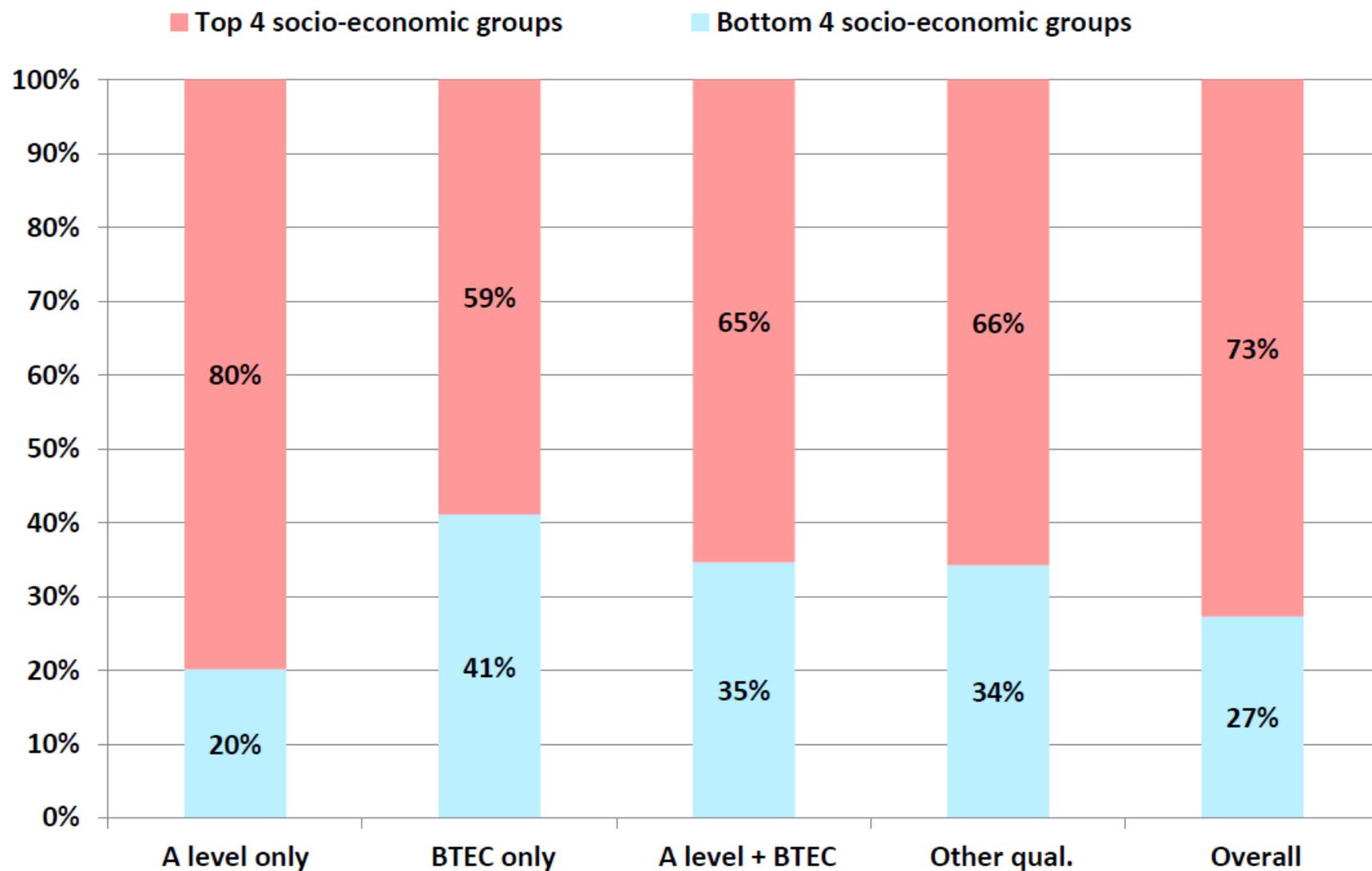
Each year, around **100,000 students** enter university with a BTEC National



# Students by qualification type (UCAS data)



## Socio-economic group of 2015 entrants by qualification type (HESA data)





**NEON'S 'SUPPORTING BTEC  
STUDENTS' WORKING GROUP  
- THE STORY SO FAR**

# TIMELINE OF GROUP ACTIVITY TO DATE

September 2018 – Initial meeting in London – Input from around 30 HEIs

January 2019 – Second meeting at University of Suffolk – ToR established and decision made for Group to focus on two specific work streams

March 2019 – Initial plans involved development of IAG resources to support learners and young people, alongside mapping of activity to support BTEC students across Student Lifecycle

## PROGRESS OF GROUP TO DATE

- In 2020, we have decided to move away from the sub-group approach. Our rationale for this is as follows:
- Targeted BTEC work is now being developed and delivered at many institutions and the work around piloting pre-arrival resources no longer serves the purpose we were originally trying to achieve.
- We have decided to utilise the NEON website and the LinkedIn Group as depositories for best practice being delivered at institutional level.
- The focus for the Group moving forward will be to continue exploring the ‘guiding principles’ as follows:
  - Championing fair admissions practices for BTEC students - Alex
  - Conducting meaningful outreach activity with BTEC students in schools and colleges – Rebecca F
  - Supporting the transition and student success of BTEC students at university - Becca
  - Understanding the needs of BTEC students through engagement with research - Chris

BREAKOUT – HOW ARE OUTREACH TEAMS  
ENGAGING WITH BTEC LEARNERS DURING  
THE CURRENT SITUATION?

BREAKOUT – HOW ARE YOU SUPPORTING  
INCOMING STUDENTS FROM BTEC  
BACKGROUNDS WITH THE TRANSITION INTO  
HE?



# INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROJECT

# Research Project

- Addressing the ‘why?’- linking to guiding principles
- How the research could take shape
- Provisional research questions
- Participants, timescales and dissemination
  
- Initial practitioner survey is now ‘live’ -  
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/MG6MHG8>

## RESEARCH THEMES – ‘GUIDING PRINCIPLES’

**Championing fair admissions practices for BTEC students**

**Conducting meaningful outreach activity with BTEC students in schools and colleges**

**Supporting the transition and student success of BTEC students at university**

**Understanding the needs of BTEC students through engagement with research**

## HOW THE RESEARCH COULD TAKE SHAPE

- Contextualised on a foundation of quantitative data regarding admissions of BTEC students to the participating institutions, alongside some 'bigger picture' national stuff.
- Qualitative primary research with students/practitioners in the form of focus groups & semi-structured interviews.

## OVERARCHING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Championing fair admissions practices for BTEC students
- 1. How do BTEC students experience the process of admission to university?
- 2. How do institutional approaches to BTEC students differ across the sector?

## OVERARCHING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Conducting meaningful outreach activity with BTEC students in schools and colleges
- 3. How useful do BTEC students feel that the outreach activity they engage with is?
- 4. What are outreach practitioners' understanding of BTEC qualification and its relationship to the activity they deliver?

## OVERARCHING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Supporting the transition and student success of BTEC students at university
- 5. How robust are mechanisms to provide specific support to BTEC students once they embark on an undergraduate degree?
- 6. How well do BTEC students feel that they have been equipped for study on a university degree?

## OVERARCHING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Understanding the needs of BTEC students through engagement with research
- 7. What level of engagement do practitioners have with research pertaining to the educational decision-making of BTEC students?

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- Is there anything else you think we need to consider/factor into this research?

**PRODUCING A PDF GUIDE BASED  
ON 'GUIDING PRINCIPLES'**

## DOWNLOADABLE GUIDE BASED ON 'GUIDING PRINCIPLES'

- We are producing a downloadable PDF guide for colleagues working across the sector based around the 'guiding principles' with the following contents:

*Cover – Pearson have put a call out via Sector manager for Art & Design in order for a BTEC student to design the cover*

*Foreword and introduction from NEON*

*Introduction from Pearson - Some input from David & Hayley around Pearson, their work with universities and colleges to support BTEC students, the annual BTEC awards and their involvement in the Group to date.*

*Introduction to the 'Guiding Principles'*

*A page (or two) on each of the 'Guiding Principles', including some case study examples of best practice in each area*

*Next steps - Reference to the practitioner research project and how the Group exists to try and support the implementation of cultural change amongst academics, practitioners and professional services colleagues within HEIs and to encourage greater knowledge exchange between FECs and HEIs*

## ADDITIONAL GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- In discussions to date, we have discussed the possibility of including two additional principles as follows:
- 'BTEC and HE progression - An FEC view' – Led by a colleague from an FEC or possibly a collaboration between a University and an FEC
- 'Changing the culture around BTEC and alternative qualification pathways in institutions' – Potentially led by Matt Williams (MMU)

Is there anything else colleagues feel should be included?

EXTERNAL SPEAKER - DR EUGENIA  
KATARTZI (UNIVERSITY OF  
NOTTINGHAM)



SHARING INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL  
RESOURCES VIA NEON WEBSITE AND  
LINKEDIN PAGE

## USING NEON WEBSITE & LINKEDIN GROUP AS DEPOSITORIES FOR PRACTICE SHARING

- <https://www.educationopportunities.co.uk/programmes/working-groups/supporting-btec-students/>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8805592/>

If you have contributions, please could you share these with Rebecca Foster - [Rebecca.Foster@uea.ac.uk](mailto:Rebecca.Foster@uea.ac.uk) / Maria-Anna Petrou - [maria-anna.petrou@londonhigher.ac.uk](mailto:maria-anna.petrou@londonhigher.ac.uk)

In our previous meeting in February at University of Leeds, members felt the following would be useful to share via these channels:

- A comprehensive skills audit
- A problem solving activity on recognising challenges and advantages
- An interactive game on referencing or academic writing styles
- A practice paraphrasing activity
- Information sheets for students to take away
- Scenario cards and answer sheet for their first week or term at university
- Key words / Jargon sheet
- List of useful resources to access and take home

# NEXT STEPS & AOB

# SCHEDULING FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

- Scope to host further online meetings during evolving current situation – How frequently?
- Once we return to face-to-face events, revisiting an event held at Pearson offices in London to showcase research project and ‘Guiding Principles’ PDF would seem sensible

## **Considerations for forthcoming meetings**

- Are there any key issues or themes you would like forthcoming meetings to cover?
- Any suggestions for external speakers?
- How can we ensure FEC representatives remain involved in the Group?

## ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) – The group was asked to submit some advice and content for a TASO toolkit on Vocational Learners. This is set to be published imminently via the TASO website.
- Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) – SRHE's Student Access and Experience Network (SAEN) have issued a resource repository focused on 'Widening Participation and Student Experience in the Age of a Global Pandemic'. Group have submitted content based on 'guiding principles' model. SRHE want us to host a session as part of online seminar series.
- Anything else?

**ANY QUESTIONS?**

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