

NEON – ‘SUPPORTING BTEC STUDENTS’ WORKING GROUP

Dr Alex Blower (University of Portsmouth), Chris Bayes (Lancaster University), Rebecca Foster (University of East Anglia) & Rebecca Sykes (University of Leeds)

NEON Summit – 2nd December

INTRODUCTION

- What is NEON?
- Why we are focusing on 'Supporting BTEC students'
- The story so far – Work of the group to date
- Overview of our guiding principles for 'Supporting BTEC students'
- Q&A

INTRODUCTION TO NEON

- NEON is the National Educational Opportunities Network, the professional organisation supporting those involved in Widening Access to Higher Education.
- Established in 2011, NEON is a member-led organisation with members being largely drawn from English universities, but we also have members in Scotland and Wales, as well as members from the school and FE sectors, alongside a healthy number of third-sector organisations.
- We are all members of NEON's 'Supporting BTEC Students Working Group' - <https://www.educationopportunities.co.uk/programmes/working-groups/supporting-btec-students/>

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



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

ESTABLISHING THE GROUP

September 2018 – Initial meeting in London – Input from around 30 HEIs – Around 70 attendees

January 2019 – ToR established and decision made for Group to focus on two specific work streams

March 2019 – Sub groups established – Sub group one (IntoUniversity & University of Leeds) – Development of IAG resources to support learners and young people

Sub group two (Lancaster University & NERUPI) – Mapping of activity to support BTEC students across Student Lifecycle

PROGRESS TO 'GUIDING PRINCIPLES' PUBLICATION

- Working Group formed two sub groups, The plan was for **Sub Group One** to look at developing resources to provide clear and transparent IAG for BTEC students and their teachers & **Sub Group Two** looking at mapping existing support for BTEC students in order to understand what really works.
- We put out two calls for details of provision supporting BTEC learners across the lifecycle to NEON members – Response rate wasn't great initially – Responses affirmed our thinking with respect to 'Guiding Principles'
- As we progressed, our focus shifted and we decided to Developed a set of '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

PROGRESS OF GROUP TO DATE – SINCE LOCKDOWN

‘REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL - 1,2,3...’

- Held two well attended meetings involving new members and engaging guest speakers
- Used the pandemic as an opportunity to push ahead with our publication
- Identified next steps for our work beyond the publication – Focus on FECs and L2/L3 progression

‘ERASE/REWIND’

- Work on supporting resources was abandoned in favour of guiding principles
- Call for practitioner based research has been answered - Small sample
- Mapping of existing cross-sector activity supporting BTEC learners is ongoing

BTEC STUDENT ADMISSIONS

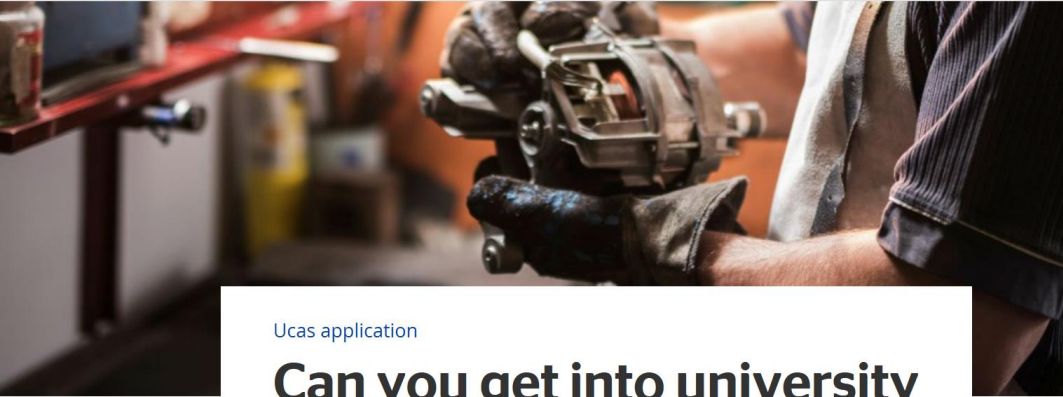
Dr Alex Blower
Outreach Coordinator, University of
Portsmouth

THE CONTEXT



Which? University

Find a course ▾ Where to study ▾ Get advice ▾



[Ucas application](#)

Can you get into university if you're studying BTECs?

By Higher Education Liaison Officers Association (HELOA)
26 June 2018
3 min read

More than 100,000 BTEC students apply to UK universities each year, and BTEC HND students can progress directly into the final year of more than 70% of degree programmes.


do universities accept btec

×

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About 5,130,000 results (0.42 seconds)

Nearly all **universities accept Btecs** in relevant subject areas, similar to how they would with equivalent A-level qualifications. **Btec** students can often be better prepared in terms of the independent studying that's required at degree level, due to the portfolio-based nature of **Btec** courses. 26 Jun 2018





[www.theuniguide.co.uk](#) › [advice](#) › [ucas-application](#) › can...


[Can you get into university if you're studying Btecs? - The Uni ...](#)



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THE VIDEO





  More people needs to speak about these situations I'm a BTEC student and some people laugh when i tell them.

 45   [REPLY](#)

  I know what you mean, my brother does a levels and most of my friends too and they always say it's easier however they're equal. Especially as I do business level 3

 6   [REPLY](#)

  MY TEACHER LIED!!! I'm doing a BTEC level 3 subsidiary diploma in Photography. My teacher made me believe I can get into any course of my choice in University with this grade. But I'm not even taking any other BTEC courseworks or A levels as it is a full time course so I have this three days a week. I really don't know what to do. I have no other qualifications and I want to go into uni next year by September. Please I need advice.



**BTEC vs A-Level | University
Toolbox**

10K views • 1 year ago



Just because someone has done something job related doesn't mean they're better than someone who hasn't. Although worded poorly, I mean that the person doing btec and me are different, we're not going to apply for the same job now, are we? Hey I studied literature, let me sign up as a mechanic or whatever btecs do.

BTEC SNOBBERY?

The Observer
Higher education

Michael Savage

Sun 28 Jan 2018 00.05 GMT



Top universities accused of BTEc snobbery

Poorer and ethnic minority students who take vocational qualifications are missing out on college places



▲ 'BTEcs don't provide an appropriate preparation for most courses, where the emphasis is more academic than vocational,' says Cambridge University. Photograph: Peter Kindersley/Bloomberg via Getty Images

Top universities have been accused of “institutional snobbery” for failing to recognise vocational qualifications increasingly used by poorer teenagers as a route to higher education.

Almost half of white working-class and black British students in England are now reaching university with qualifications such as BTEcs, according to new research from the Social Market Foundation thinktank. However, some of Britain's most prestigious universities still fail to recognise the qualification. Campaigners warn that it creates a barrier to entry for disadvantaged students and acts as a brake on social mobility.

The UK's only inde
devoted

Blog

Publications

Events

Lectures

Higher education institutions could do more to help BTEC students, says new HEPI report

23 February 2017

In a new HEPI paper, [Reforming BTECs: Applied General qualifications as a route to higher education](#) (HEPI report 94), Dr Scott Kelly considers the rise in the number of university students holding BTECs.

Students arriving at university with BTECs account for much of the growth in students from the lowest participation neighbourhoods and other under-represented groups over the past decade. But those with BTECs face a 'glass ceiling' – for example:

INSTITUTIONAL APPROACHES TO BTEC

In May 2019 a Prospectus scoping exercise with 30 higher tariff institutions was conducted (Russell Group +6 more) covering the following areas:

Which qualification types are uniformly featured on course pages?

Are BTEC entry requirements featured on course pages?

Is a clear approach to admissions relating to BTEC qualifications described?

If I were studying a BTEC Extended Diploma would I be able to understand my eligibility to apply based on the information given in the prospectus?

THE FINDINGS



- Of the 30 prospectuses reviewed, **13** detailed a clear approach to admissions relating to BTEC applicants.
- Of the 30 prospectuses reviewed, **10** had BTEC qualifications uniformly featured on each of their course pages
- Of the 30 prospectuses reviewed, **10** held information regarding BTEC entry requirements which would be specific enough for students to understand their eligibility given the information available.

THE FINDINGS



- Of the 24 RG prospectuses reviewed, 8 detailed a clear approach to admissions relating to BTEC applicants.
- Of the 24 RG prospectuses reviewed, 6 had BTEC qualifications uniformly featured on each of their course pages
- Of the 24 RG prospectuses reviewed, 8 held information regarding BTEC entry requirements which would be specific enough for students to understand their eligibility given the information available.

BY WAY OF COMPARISON...



***IB Entry Requirements
were uniformly
featured in 26 of the 30
prospectuses***

The number of students applying to higher education with the IB has doubled in the last decade; in 2008 there were 1,035 acceptances, while in 2017 there were 2,190 acceptances – a figure that has remained pretty stable for the last few years.



EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Manchester

Birmingham

Liverpool

	UCAS code	Courses length	A-level	Typical entry requirements	Additional A-level, IB and GCSE/GCSE requirements	English Language	Pages	
			A-level	IB	Students must demonstrate strong general education including acceptable levels of literacy and numeracy, equivalent to at least grade C/A in GCSE/GCSE English Language and Mathematics. English Language will not be accepted for IB students.	IB: English Language Requirements must be at least 6.0		
COURSE								
ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE								
Accounting (BSc)	N400	3	AAA	AAB	▶ 35 points overall with 6.6 at HL	IB: students without GCSE/GCSE Maths at Grade A7 and English Language at B5 will need 6 in SL Maths and 5 in SL English Language A. English is offered at SL, we would need you to achieve it. We do not currently accept Maths Studies for the purposes of meeting our Maths subject requirements. GCSE/GCSE: to include Maths at Grade A7 and English Language at Grade B5.	6.5 with no less than 6.0 in any individual component.	
Accounting and Finance (BAEcon)	N443	3	AAB	ABB	▶ 35 points overall with 6.6 at HL	A-levels: to include at least one of the following A-level subjects: Accounting, Anthropology, Business Studies, Classics, Economics, English Language, Literature, Further Maths, Geography, History, Law, Maths, Modern Languages, Philosophy, Politics, Physiology, Religious Studies, Sociology and World Development. IB: Applicants offering Maths or Maths Studies at SL or HL must achieve a minimum of 5. Applicants taking English Language A must achieve at least 4 in SL. Applicants offering English Language B must achieve 5 at HL and 4 at SL. GCSE/GCSE: to include Maths at Grade A7 and English Language at Grade B5.	6.5 with no less than 6.0 in any individual component.	55
Accounting with Industrial/Professional Experience (BSc)	N401	4	AAA	AAB	▶ 35 points overall with 6.6 at HL	IB: students without GCSE/GCSE Maths at Grade A7 and English Language at B5 will need 6 in SL Maths and 5 in SL English Language A. English is offered at SL, we would need you to achieve it. We do not currently accept Maths Studies for the purposes of meeting our Maths subject requirements. GCSE/GCSE: to include Maths at Grade A7 and English Language at Grade B5.	6.5 with no less than 6.0 in any individual component.	55
Economics and Finance (BAEcon)	LN13	3	AAB	ABB	▶ 35 points overall with 6.6 at HL	A-levels: to include at least one of the following A-level subjects: Accounting, Anthropology, Business Studies, Classics, Economics, English Language, Literature, Further Maths, Geography, History, Law, Maths, Modern Languages, Philosophy, Politics, Physiology, Religious Studies, Sociology and World Development. IB: Applicants offering Maths or Maths Studies at SL or HL must achieve a minimum of 5. Applicants taking English Language A must achieve at least 4 in SL. Applicants offering English Language B must achieve 5 at HL and 4 at SL. GCSE/GCSE: to include Maths at Grade A7 and English Language at Grade B5.	6.5 with no less than 6.0 in any individual component.	55
Finance (BAEcon)	N300	3	AAB	ABB	▶ 35 points overall with 6.6 at HL	IB: students without GCSE/GCSE Maths at Grade A7 and English Language at B5 will need 6 in SL Maths and 5 in SL English Language A. English is offered at SL, we would need you to achieve it. We do not currently accept Maths Studies for the purposes of meeting our Maths subject requirements. GCSE/GCSE: to include Maths at Grade B5.	6.5 with no less than 6.0 in any individual component.	55

Biochemistry with Professional Placement MSci	C102	4	AAA	0, 0, 0	■	✓	A level Chemistry and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C102
Biochemistry with Study in Continental Europe BSc	C101	4	AAB	0, 0, 0	■	✓	A level Chemistry and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C and grade 5/5 in a relevant foreign language (French, German or Spanish).	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C101
Biological Sciences (Genetics) BSc	C400	3	AAB	0, 0, 0	■		A level Biology/Human Biology and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C400
Biological Sciences (Zoology) BSc	C300	3	AAB	0, 0, 0	■		A level Biology/Human Biology and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C300
Biological Sciences BSc	C103	3	AAB	0, 0, 0	■		A level Biology/Human Biology and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C103
Biological Sciences MSci	C105	4	AAA	0, 0, 0	■		A level Biology/Human Biology and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C105
Biological Sciences with an International Year BSc	C201	4	AAA	0, 0, 0	■	✓	A level Biology/Human Biology and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C201
Biological Sciences with Professional Placement MSci	C102	4	AAA	0, 0, 0	■	✓	A level Biology/Human Biology and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C102
Biological Sciences with Study in Continental Europe BSc	C101	4	AAB	0, 0, 0	■	✓	A level Biology/Human Biology and a second science*. Minimum of five GCSEs to include Mathematics, English and double award science at grade 4/C and grade 5/5 in a relevant foreign language (French, German or Spanish).	www.birmingham.ac.uk/C101
Biomedical Materials Science BSc/BSc	B405	3	AAB	0, 0, 0	■		Two sciences required at A level, one of which has to be Biology or Chemistry.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/B405
Biomedical Science BSc	B500	3	AAB	0, 0, 0	■	✗	Two science A levels from Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, or Physics. GCSE grade 5/5 in Mathematics, Biology and Chemistry (or double award science).	www.birmingham.ac.uk/B500
Business Management (Year in Industry) BSc	N201	4	AAB	0, 0, 0	●	✓	GCSE Mathematics and English at grade 5/5.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/N201
Business Management BSc	N200	3	AAB	0, 0, 0	●		GCSE Mathematics and English at grade 5/5.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/N200
Business Management with Communications and Year in Industry BSc	N101	4	AAB	0, 0, 0	●	✓	GCSE requirements are GCSE Maths and English at grade 5/5.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/N101
Business Management with Communications BSc	N100	3	AAB	0, 0, 0	●		GCSE Mathematics and English at grade 5/5.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/N100
BSc Business Management with Marketing and a Year in Industry BSc	N203	4	AAB	0, 0, 0	●	✓	GCSE requirements are GCSE Maths and English at grade 5/5.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/N203
Business Management with Marketing BSc	N202	3	AAB	0, 0, 0	●	✓	GCSE Mathematics and English at grade 5/5.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/N202
Certificate in English Law	-	1					Applications are made through the University's International Office.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/international
Chemical Engineering (International Study) MEng	H201	4	A*AA/AAA	1, 0, 0	■	✓	A level Mathematics and Chemistry required.	www.birmingham.ac.uk/H201

● BTEC Extended Diploma considered (in relevant subject)	■ BTEC only considered when combined with other qualifications	◆ BTEC considered on a case-by-case basis	✗ Not accepted	* See course finder for details of subjects considered to be a science
Footnote: (B scores are for Higher Level subjects unless otherwise stated and we require 30 points overall in addition to relevant subjects)				
In relation to GCSE reforms we can confirm our position in terms of equivalences: A*=4, A=3, B=4, C=4. For more details, visit www.birmingham.ac.uk/engages				

Dentistry

At Liverpool we'll train you to be a working dental professional. Your learning will always benefit from being in context and applied. With 160 clinical dental chairs and a busy dental hospital on-site, we can offer you first-rate clinical training, complemented by innovative learning suites that feature interactive technology.

Download the full Dentistry brochure from www.liverpool.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/publications/

Programmes at-a-glance

	UCAS code	A level	BTEC (Level 3 National Extended Diploma)
Bachelor of Dental Surgery BDS 5 years	A200	AAA	Not accepted
Dental Hygiene and Dental Therapy BSc (Hons) 3 years	B750		

Foundation to Health and Veterinary Studies (Year 0) 1 year

- Dentistry (Year 0) OAAW
- Dental Therapy (Year 0) BAAW

BTEC KEY

- ▶ BTECs considered (in relevant subject).
- BTECs only considered when combined with other qualifications such as A-levels.
- BTECs not accepted

CONSIDERATIONS

Why do higher tariff institutions take such an inconsistent approach to the inclusion of BTEC entry requirements?

How far are BTEC students likely to go to find out information that is not transparent and easily locatable?

Which questions should this group be asking, and to who, in order to instigate a more transparent approach to university admission processes for BTEC students?

Change is coming in vocational education (T Levels). How do we ensure that similar mistakes aren't made?

CONDUCTING MEANINGFUL OUTREACH ACTIVITY WITH BTEC STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Rebecca Foster

Outreach Officer, University of East Anglia

ENGAGING BTEC PROVIDES IN IN-SCHOOL/COLLEGE ACTIVITY

- Flexible Offer
- Value: Gatsby, Personal Development Plans, Not a competitor
- Evidence of working
- Understanding barriers: High staff turn over, less experience with HE
- Specific presentations: Confidence, Sense of belonging
- Specific subjects: Business, Computer Science, Health Sciences and Sport

ENGAGING BTEC LEANERS AND PROVIDERS IN EVENTS

UEA BTEC specific events

- BTEC stars of the east awards
- Webinars
- Student lead content

UEA Adapted events for BTEC learners

- Make it count and Preparing for University MOOC: Exams, Independent learning, Academic Writing, Maths, Referencing

Language

Awareness

Accessibility

OTHERS BEST PRACTICE

- In School/College Study Skills support
- Level 3, HE swaps
- Support for tutors
- Mentoring/Ambassadors
- Online modules/library resources



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS



SUPPORTING THE TRANSITION & STUDENT SUCCESS OF BTEC STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY

Becca Sykes
Educational Engagement Manager
University of Leeds



CORE PRINCIPLES

- Identify

Utilise in-house business intelligence to conduct research to understand and inform practice. Including the student voice into programmes ensures they can be tailored to their needs.

- Evaluate

Evaluate existing initiatives, make changes where needed, share best practice.

- Share

Collaboration is required across academic staff, student support and professional services and senior management. Challenge misconceptions amongst staff, raise awareness of different needs for different students.

- Embed

Academic skills improvement pre and post entry, inclusive curriculum content and assessment as well as signposting to key support services for BTEC students



WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

- A sound understanding of available datasets on BTEC students
- A good understanding of the issues that BTEC students face
- A complete understanding of research and best practice in the sector concerning support for BTEC students in HE and what is appropriate to roll out at UoL
- Faculties and Schools to understand the need and means to support BTEC students and their part in embedding support at the University
- Awareness raising to challenge myths and change perceptions regarding BTEC students
- Improved monitoring of at risk students (including BTEC) regarding NC/attainment/progression and target tailored support
- BTEC students to feel supported during their transition to HE
- BTEC students to feel academically prepared for their transition to HE
- BTEC students to feel that they are welcome and belong at the UoL
- Improve the retention, attainment and progression rates for BTEC students.



HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS

Pre-Entry Outreach

- Updating communications and materials to be inclusive
- Using student hosts as peer mentors on Outreach activity
- BTEC specific visits
- Webinars
- Development of an HE preparatory BTEC MOOC
- Knowledge transfer workshops
- Transition into Leeds – Summer 2020*delayed to 2021 due to Covid-19

HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS

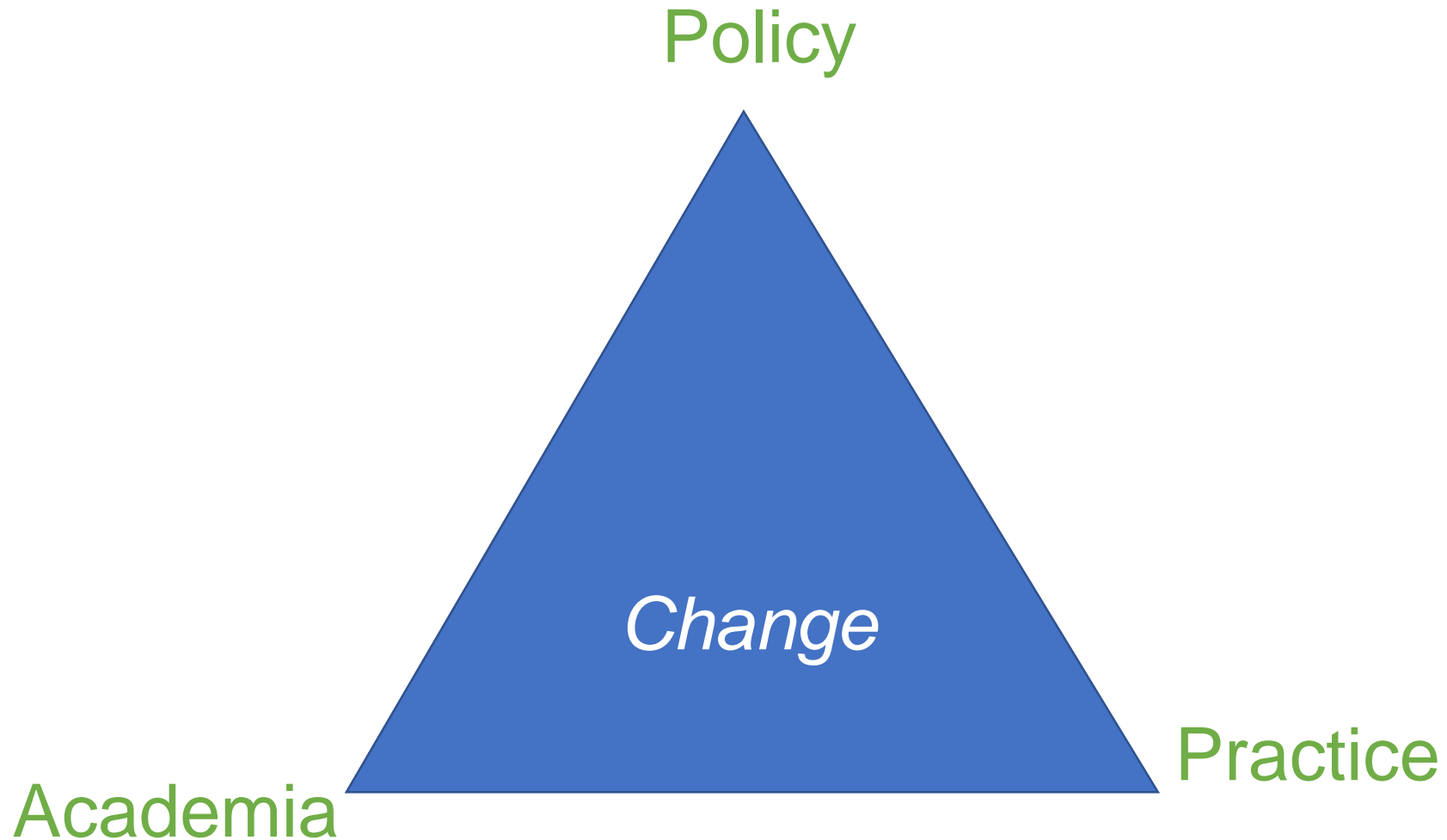
On Course Support

- Appointment of 8 Student Success Officers
- Continued conversations to raise the profile of BTEC with Academics, Heads of Schools, Directors of Student Education, Pro Deans, Admissions, Marketing
- Changes to curriculum, modules or assessment
- Student focus groups
- Sense of Belonging Survey
- Peer mentoring
- BTEC Masterclass
- Signposting to appropriate support
 - Skills @ Library
 - Careers
- Regular meetings and Student Success forums with colleagues to share best practice

UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF BTEC STUDENTS THROUGH ENGAGEMENT WITH RESEARCH

**Chris Bayes – Outreach & Student Success
Manager, Lancaster University**

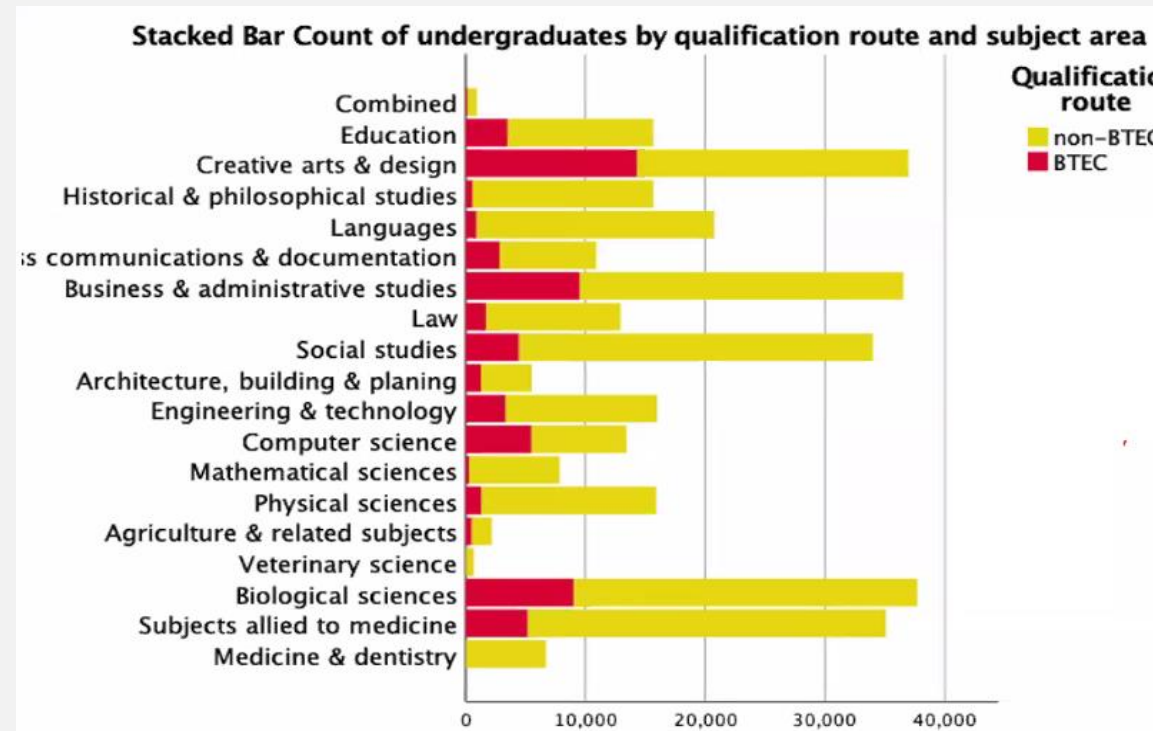
Connecting Research and Practice in Widening Participation:



CONNECTING RESEARCH & PRACTICE

- We delivered a session at the Higher Education Liaison Officers Association (HELOA) Annual Conference in January and posed the following questions to the audience:
- How many colleagues in the room have spent time reading research papers before planning a project? **Not many colleagues had done so**
- **How many attendees today have engaged with WP practitioners and teams in their home institution?**
- We have a major issue within the sector around the disconnect between policy, research and practice

SUPPORTING BTEC STUDENTS – REFLECTIONS FROM RECENT SRHE SESSION



SUPPORTING BTEC STUDENTS – REFLECTIONS FROM RECENT SRHE SESSION

FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH

- BTEC students find academic course demands – exams, writing – a challenge
- Assessment and course content at traditional institutions favours A level students
- Personalised support something BTEC students value

PRACTITIONER INSIGHT/EXAMPLES OF IMPLEMENTATION

- A lot of HEIs provide support in this space post-entry, but by this point it is often too late
- In focus groups, a sample of students shared how 1st year replicated A level curriculum content
- Lancaster Success Programme – Participants are assigned a Success Advisor to provide 1:1 support

SUPPORTING BTEC STUDENTS – REFLECTIONS FROM RECENT SRHE SESSION

FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH

- Need to move from a position where we move from describing BTEC learners from a position of deficit
- Confidence of BTEC learners increased by having peers from similar backgrounds
- A need for organisational change – Greater knowledge exchange internally and across institutions

PRACTITIONER INSIGHT/EXAMPLES OF IMPLEMENTATION

- Use of ‘Capabilities Approach’ focused on students strengths and skills, rather than what they can’t do
- Development of cohort identity amongst BTEC students problematic due to not wanting to feed into deficit model approaches
- Feedback from HELOA Conference – “Session too focused on Russell Group” – Failure of reflective practice amongst SR colleagues
- Getting prestigious HEIs to take on board findings from post 92 HEIs has proven tricky
- We have discussed a future ‘guiding principle’ based around supporting institutional change

QUESTIONS FOR YOU

- What are your thoughts on the work of the group to date? Are we covering things related to BTEC agenda which you'd expect? Is there anything we are missing?
- How can we work to ensure there is a two-way communication channel between the NEON Group & SRHE colleagues?
- Is there anything else you would like the NEON Working Group to focus on?

ANY QUESTIONS?

Email – c.bayes@lancaster.ac.uk