

Adviser guide:

Applied General and Tech Level qualifications

What is happening to vocational qualifications?

In England, vocational qualifications that contribute towards school performance measures have been reformed, and are now classified as either Applied Generals or Tech Levels. The largest provider of vocational qualifications is Pearson, with the BTEC qualification, but AQA, City & Guilds, OCR, and other boards all offer vocational qualifications in these categories.

Changes to these qualifications include:

- **size** – Applied General qualifications must require at least 150 Guided Learning Hours (GLH). Tech Level qualifications must require at least 300 GLH
- **content** – a qualification specification must state the specific content students must pass to achieve it. Mandatory content,

and the associated contribution to the overall grade, must make up at least 60% of an Applied General, and 40% of a Tech Level

- **assessment** – Applied Generals must have at least 40% external assessment. Tech Levels must have 30% external assessment. Students will also be given one opportunity to resit
- **synoptic assessment** – the qualification must assess that a student can use all of the skills, techniques, concepts, theories, and knowledge they have learnt
- **grading** – all vocational qualifications must be graded using three grading points or more, such as distinction / merit / pass

How are these qualifications listed in UCAS Apply?

We have made some changes to help you and your students select the right qualifications in UCAS Apply. Some reformed vocational qualifications have different titles, including the new BTEC National qualifications – these now include the GLH, and ‘first teaching 2016’:

- Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Certificate (180) (first teaching Sept 2016)
- Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate (360) (first teaching Sept 2016)

- Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Foundation Diploma (510–540) (first teaching Sept 2016)
- Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Diploma (720) (first teaching Sept 2016)
- Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Extended Diploma (1,080) (first teaching Sept 2016)

Previous versions of the BTEC National qualifications include ‘QCF’ in the title.

We have also included the titles of new Applied General and Tech level qualifications from other exam boards.

What is the impact of these changes?

- As these qualifications have fundamentally changed, the skills and aptitudes an applicant develops are likely to be very different.
- The changes to assessment, to include both external and synoptic assessment, as well as changes to resits, means it is likely that fewer applicants will pass the qualification. The grade distributions will also change, with fewer applicants achieving the top grades.
- HE providers may publish different entry requirements for different versions of these qualifications.
- The dual running of both the reformed and unreformed

versions may result in applicants declaring the wrong qualification on their UCAS application. This can cause problems for the university or college when reviewing the application, and could result in the applicant receiving an inaccurate decision.

- Due to the inclusion of external assessments, results for reformed vocational qualifications will be sent to HE providers in August, therefore, students will not receive their university or college decisions until A level results day.
- Funding decisions may mean that students have limited choice in the type and size of their vocational qualification.

What can you do to help?

- ✓ Ensure your [qualifications shortlist](#) in UCAS Undergraduate Apply is up-to-date. This will help your students select the right qualifications.
- ✓ Work with your students to ensure they enter the correct version of their qualification in their application.
- ✓ Use the reference to tell the university or college more. Create a web page giving details of the qualifications you offer and

the rationale, which can then be entered in the reference. The [SPA NETT guidance on what HE providers would like to know in the reference](#) can also help.



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Unsure which qualification your students are taking?

- ✓ Talk to your Exams Officer to find the Qualification Accreditation Number (QAN), and use the [Ofqual register](#) to find the right version of the qualification.
- ✓ Ask the relevant subject teacher for the qualification specification, which will include the QAN.

Need more information?

- ✓ [UCAS' Qualification Information profiles \(QIPs\)](#): UCAS has worked with awarding organisations to create QIPs for Applied General and Tech level qualifications.
- ✓ [Applying to HE with reformed qualifications](#): videos, surveys, FAQs, and other resources, including a guide to qualification reform across the UK.
- ✓ [Contact UCAS](#) for further advice.

Quick reference guides

Reformed BTEC titles

As the largest provider of vocational qualifications, we have produced a list of reformed and legacy titles for the Pearson BTECs. Further information on all vocational qualifications, including full specifications, can be found on individual awarding organisation websites, or in [UCAS' QIPs](#).

Guided Learning Hours (GLH)	Legacy title	Reformed title
180	BTEC Level 3 Certificate (graded P, M, D, D*)	BTEC Level 3 National Certificate (graded P, M, D, D*)
360	BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma (graded P, M, D, D*)	BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate (graded P, M, D, D*)
510/540	BTEC Level 3 90-Credit Diploma (graded PP to D*D*)	BTEC Level 3 National Foundation Diploma (graded P, M, D, D*)
720	BTEC Level 3 Diploma (graded PP to D*D*)	BTEC Level 3 National Diploma (graded PP to D*D*)
1080	BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma (graded PPP to D*D*D*)	BTEC Level 3 National Extended Diploma (graded PPP to D*D*D*)

Department for Education (DfE) criteria for vocational qualifications

The characteristics that must be met by vocational qualifications, as detailed in the DfE criteria:

Criteria	Interim requirement (for qualifications counting in 2016 performance tables)	Full requirement (for qualifications counting in 2018 performance tables)
A. Declared purpose	X	X
B. Size	X	X
C. Recognition	X	X
D. Synoptic assessment		X
E. External assessment		X
F. Grading		X
G. Employer involvement (Technical Level Qualifications only)		X
H. Progression		X
I. Proven track record		X

Further information about vocational qualifications, and the range of qualifications that meet these requirements, can be found on the [DfE website](#).

