



GO HIGHER

BTEC HIGHER NATIONALS STUDENT GUIDE

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TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR CAREER

With so many students wanting to make their mark in the world, it is becoming more important to gain the right skills to be confident in the work force.

What are Higher Nationals?

BTEC Higher Nationals are technical and professional qualifications designed to support your lifelong learning journey. They provide career-focused experience and academic knowledge, ensuring you gain the industry-recognised expertise needed for employment or further study. With a blend of practical skills and theoretical understanding, you'll be well-prepared to take the next step in your career or education.

How can they help you to succeed?

BTEC Higher Nationals are designed in collaboration with employers and professional bodies to bridge skills gaps across various sectors. This ensures alignment with recognised professional standards and university degree programmes. This also means that you will be studying the skills that employers want and need.

BTEC Higher Nationals address the growing demand for high-quality professional and technical qualifications at Levels 4 and 5, equivalent to the first two years of an undergraduate degree. They provide a clear pathway to the workforce or progression to a Level 6 degree.



"Because of the HNC, I developed a thirst for lifelong learning. It made me appreciate that with the right support and course, anyone can achieve their goals."
Brendan Coulson | HNC Computing Alumni



WHY CHOOSE BTEC HIGHER NATIONALS

1 Gain the skills employers want and need

BTEC Higher Nationals combine practical undergraduate learning with career-focused experience, allowing you to develop technical skills valued by employers and the knowledge needed to excel in your career. You could learn and develop key skills such as:

- Problem-solving and decision making
- Organisation and working to deadlines
- Sector-specific skills and knowledge

2 Designed to work in a digital world

To ensure you have the best possible experience during your course, your BTEC Higher National qualification is supported by a specially designed range of digital resources. These are available on our free platform for Higher National students – HN Global. With HN Global, you'll have access to the following:

- **Online learning courses:** develop study skills to support your higher education studies
- **Career development:** access a wide range of resources to help you prepare for the workforce
- **Community connection:** interact with other BTEC Higher National students and alumni from around the world via online forums, where you can discuss anything relevant to your course.

3 Study for less and earn more

BTEC Higher Nationals are cost-effective undergraduate, higher education courses with typically lower tuition fees than university courses, offering the option to study locally. Additionally, data shows that many HNC and HND graduates earn more than those with an undergraduate degree once they enter the workforce (*Department for Education, Education to Employment dashboard*).

- **Costs:** Annual BTEC Higher National tuition fees are at the discretion of the college and can be found on their website or within their prospectus. However, it is usually much less than studying at university.
- **Funding:** BTEC Higher Nationals are eligible for student loan funding within Further Education Colleges, but typically, you will only receive student finance for your first higher education qualification. If you are considering a BTEC Higher National at a private college in the UK, you will need to consult with the college regarding tuition fees.

If you are a student in the UK and want to read more about loans and grants, visit www.gov.uk/student-finance



PROGRESSION PATHWAYS

Entry points: A level 3 qualification, for example, a BTEC level 3, A-level or T-level. Access to HE Diploma.



Level 4 Higher National Certificate (120 Credits)



Level 5 Higher National Diploma (120 Credits)



Full-time
employment

Level 6 Honours
degree programme

Professional body
qualifications

1

Topping up to gain a degree: BTEC Higher National qualifications are recognised by universities around the globe, allowing you to top up your qualification to earn an undergraduate degree. To explore this option, use the Degree Finder search tool on our website. Please check the entry requirements for degree programs at specific higher education institutions.

2

Joining the workforce: We collaborate with employers to design our qualifications, ensuring that BTEC Higher Nationals are current and meet the modern-day needs of the industry. This means you will be learning the practical skills and knowledge that employers seek, preparing you effectively for the workforce.

3

Professional recognition: By working closely with professional bodies, we create progression routes for BTEC Higher National holders. This allows you to use your qualification to fully or partially claim a professional certification and gain accelerated progression towards, for example, Chartered status.

BTEC Higher National qualification	Some examples of current exemptions/vendor accreditations for BTEC Higher Nationals
Business	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants ACCA, CIMA, CIPD, CIPS
Computing	CompTIA, CISCO, Microsoft, Oracle, AXELOS
Construction and the Built Environment	Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), Institution of Structural Engineers (iStructE), Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation (CIHT), Institute of Highways Engineers (IHE).



SUBJECT AREAS

There are a wide range of different courses to choose from, along with specialist pathways available for each course. The following subject areas are available to study at both HNC and HND level:

Aeronautical Engineering*	Graphic Design
Agriculture	Journalism
Animal Management	Healthcare Practice*
Animation	Hospitality Management
Applied Sciences	Horticulture
Architectural Technology*	Interior Design
Art and Design	International Travel and Tourism Management
Automation and Control Engineering*	Manufacturing Engineering*
Building Services Engineering*	Manufacturing Operations*
Business*	Mechanical Engineering*
Civil Engineering*	Mechatronics*
Cloud Computing*	Modern Methods of Construction*
Computing*	Music
Computer Systems Engineering*	Operations Engineering*
Construction	Performing Arts
Construction and the Built Environment	Photography
Construction Management*	Policing
Counselling and Applied Psychology	Product Design
Creative Media Production	Public Services
Digital Technologies*	Quantity Surveying*
Early Childhood Education and Care*	Rail Engineering
Electrical and Electronic Engineering*	Social and Community Work
Electrical Systems Engineering*	Sound Media
Electronic and Electrical Systems Engineering*	Space Technologies*
Electronic Systems Engineering*	Sport*
Engineering*	Sport and Exercise Science
Esports	The Animation Industry
Fashion and Textiles	Travel and Tourism Management
Film and Television	Visual Effects
Fine Art	Web Design
Game Development	

*HTQs available in this sector for students in England only.

TYPES OF BTEC HIGHER NATIONALS

BTEC Higher Nationals have been expertly designed in collaboration with industry professionals, subject specialists, education partners, apprentice alumni, and learner groups. This means you can study with confidence, knowing that our qualifications will meet both your learning needs and the demands of the workforce.

Higher National Certificate (HNC)

Usually takes one year to complete if studying full time, and two years if studying part time.

Equivalent to the first year of a University degree (level 4).

Usually a more introductory programme with a 'core' of learning essential to the subject (some sectors may have more specialist content depending on level of entry to the job market).

Opportunities to develop project management skills.

Assessment for both years will be through a varied programme of assignments.

Core modules credit values may vary by subject but will not be less than 30% of the whole qualification.

Higher National Diploma (HND)

Usually takes two years to complete if studying full time, and four years if studying part time.

Equivalent to the first and second year of a University degree (level 5).

A more specialised programme of learning with pathways linked to occupational outcomes.

An increased focus on research skills.





HIGHER TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS

Higher Technical Qualifications, or HTQs, are technical qualifications available for students in England at higher education level.

At Pearson, our HTQs are the same BTEC Higher Nationals you know and love, but with an added layer of industry involvement. The HTQ quality mark signifies that they provide high-quality technical education, developed with employers. They align with employer-led occupational standards, equipping you with the skills and knowledge needed for specific career paths.

Currently, we offer over 40 HTQs across eight sectors, including Business, Computing, Construction, Digital Technologies, Early Years, Engineering, Healthcare and Sport.

To learn more about HTQs, search '[Skills for Life](#)' to visit the Department for Education's website. You can also get in touch with your local centre to find out which HTQs they may offer.



"I knew I wanted to take a more practical route into my career. After deliberating for a while, I decided that the best option was the HND Computing course; it fit in with all my needs and its HTQ status added more value to the qualification."

Chloe Caine | HND in Computing (HTQ) Alumna

STUDENT SUCCESSES



Preeya Lakhani | HND in Engineering

After completing her BTEC level 3 Diploma, Preeya progressed onto an Apprenticeship with Proctor and Gamble, then to Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) where she studied her HNC and HND in Engineering part time. Preeya has since gone on to complete a master's degree in Engineering and is now achieving her dreams by working as a Programme Manager for satellite programmes in the UK at Lockheed Martin.



Matt Chilvers | HND in Sport (Leisure Management)

Before studying his HND, Matt completed a BTEC Level 3 Diploma in Sport Exercise Fitness. He found the transition from the Level 3 to the HND (covering levels 4 and 5) a smooth process due to similar assessment styles using coursework-based assignments throughout. Matt then continued at his College for an extra year to top-up his qualification and now has a BA (Hons) Sport Management Degree.



Anneth Vanessa Albino | HND in Business (Management)

Deciding to study an HND in Business because of its ability to be applicable across a wide range of different sectors, Anneth took the course part time, enabling her to start a cafe in her local town in the Philippines in partnership with local farmers. She now manages the cafe whilst also working towards topping up her qualification to gain an Undergraduate degree in Business.

"I am confident with what my programme has taught me, especially my favourite lessons - learning about value chains and business strategies. With the help of the knowledge and skills I have gained in my Higher National, I was able to turn my simple hobbies into my career. I am grateful that I have had the opportunity to study and work at the same time."



YOUR NEXT STEPS

1

Research

If you are interested in studying a BTEC Higher National qualification, spend time researching courses and careers that interest you.

2

Explore institutions

Visit college website(s), read their prospectus, and attend open days to find out more about what they have to offer.

3

Make your application

Check that you meet all application requirements. Speak to your careers advisor for further support and submitting your application.



"Enrolling on a BTEC course has changed my life because it's given me a prospect and a qualification that I need. And I can use this knowledge at work, as well as work knowledge at college so it works both ways."

Christopher Meredith | HNC Engineering Alumni

Further questions? Get in touch!

If you have any questions, or would like to find out more about our BTEC Higher National qualifications, contact your local institution, or email us at highernationals@pearson.com.

