



Custom BTEC qualifications driving skills for Saudi Arabia's automotive future

When the National Automotive and Vehicles Academy (NAVA) opened its doors in King Abdullah Economic City, it set out to do something ambitious: to prepare Saudi and MENA youth for the fast-changing automotive and manufacturing industries.

“We want to give young people the skills and confidence to build fulfilling careers,” explains Dr Ghazi Droubi, Dean of the Academy. “Our mission is not only to develop technical expertise, but also to align with the Kingdom’s Vision 2030 and support the growth of a knowledge-driven economy.”

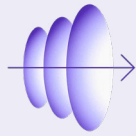
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Dr Ghazi Droubi, Dean, NAVA

Why a Custom Designed BTEC Qualification?



By 2024, NAVA recognised a clear challenge. Traditional education pathways were not keeping pace with emerging technologies or the new demands of employers. To bridge that gap, the Academy partnered with Pearson to co-design a custom BTEC International Level 3 qualification.

“Our first cohort joined in October 2024,” says Dr Droubi. “From the start, we wanted a programme that combined academic credibility with practical, hands-on learning. Pearson BTEC offered us the perfect platform to do that.”



Shaping the qualification



Working closely with Pearson’s specialists, NAVA developed two tailored pathways:

- Pearson BTEC International Level 3 Foundation Programme for Higher Education in Manufacturing (Award)
- Pearson BTEC International Level 3 Foundation Programme for Higher Education in Manufacturing (Certificate)

“The collaboration with Pearson was essential,” reflects Dr Droubi. “Their experience in qualification design, assessment, and quality assurance meant we could create something rigorous, relevant, and internationally recognised. The support we received at every stage gave us confidence that the programme would meet the highest standards while staying responsive to industry needs.”



Real impact on learners and industry



For learners, the new BTEC pathway has been a turning point. With a curriculum designed around employability, real-world projects, and industry collaboration, students are prepared not just to continue to higher education, but to enter the workforce ready to contribute from day one.

“This qualification is about more than knowledge—it’s about capability,” says Dr Droubi. “Our students gain the professional skills, adaptability, and confidence that employers are looking for.”

Industry partners are also seeing the benefits. The alignment between the curriculum and workplace demands ensures graduates are trained for the specific skills gaps employers need to fill, strengthening the talent pipeline and supporting the Kingdom’s long-term competitiveness.

Lessons learned



Asked what advice he would give to others considering a custom qualification, Dr Droubi is clear: “It’s a fantastic opportunity, but it requires a thoughtful approach. You need to understand your learners and your industry inside out, and you need a partner who brings expertise and flexibility. Pearson has been that partner for us. Their systematic approach and ongoing support made a complex process much smoother.”



Looking ahead



Overall, Dr Droubi describes the experience as “incredibly positive.” The partnership with Pearson BTEC has enabled NAVA to build qualifications that not only meet today’s needs but are adaptable for the future.

“Our graduates leave us well-prepared for higher education and employment,” he says. “That’s the real measure of success. Pearson has helped us create a programme that will keep delivering value to learners, employers, and the wider community for years to come.”