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BTEC Higher National Equivalency

To whom it may concern,

Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals are made up of 120 UK credits (UKCTS) at Level 4 (Higher National Certificate) and a further 120 credits at Level 5- to make up a 240 UKCTS, with a Total Qualification Time of 2,400 hours. Higher National specifications can be found via this [link](#). Pearson is an [OfQual regulated awarding body](#) and BTEC Higher National qualifications (RQF) are regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (OFQUAL), the English qualifications' regulator, and is a prescribed qualifications of Higher Education in the UK as designated by The Office for Students (OfS).

The QAA [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#) document confirms that HNC and HND are positioned at [UK Level 4 and level 5](#) respectively. HNCs are equivalent to the Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) – and correspond to the completion of one year of a UK undergraduate full time degree. HNDs are equivalent to the Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) – and correspond to the completion of two years of a UK undergraduate full time degree. Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNDs) and are formally recognised as Higher Education qualifications at Level 4 and 5 and are included on the [Department for Education's official list of qualifications](#). Because HNCs and HNDs are regulated and recognised at Level 4 and 5, graduates are typically eligible to progress to the later stages of undergraduate degree programmes (often the second and final year, respectively).

UK ENIC, responsible for issuing recognition and equivalence statements for overseas credentials, positions Higher National Diplomas, as indicated in the following table taken from their website [Homepage | UK ENIC](https://www.ukenik.gov.uk/).

The FHEQ consists of levels 4-8 and includes qualifications awarded by degree-awarding bodies.

General and vocational education		Higher education	
RQF Level		FHEQ Level	Qualifications
8	Vocational, technical and professional qualifications	8	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Professional Doctorate
7	Level 7 NVQ Vocational, technical and professional qualifications	7	Master's degree (e.g. MA, MSc, MPhil, MRes) Integrated Master's Degree Primary (or first) qualifications in medicine (e.g. MB BS, MB ChB), dentistry (e.g. BDS) and veterinary science (e.g. BVSc) Postgraduate Certificate Postgraduate Diploma
6	Level 6 NVQ Vocational, technical and professional qualifications	6	Bachelor (Honours) degree Bachelor (Ordinary) degree Graduate Certificate Graduate Diploma
5	BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma (HND) Level 5 NVQ Vocational, technical and professional qualifications	5	Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) Foundation degree Higher National Diploma (HND)
4	BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate (HNC) Level 4 NVQ Vocational, technical and professional qualifications	4	Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) Higher National Certificate (HNC)
3	GCE Advanced (A) level GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level BTEC Nationals Level 3 NVQ Vocational, technical and professional qualifications		
2	GCSE (grades 9-4 / A*-C) BTEC Firsts Level 2 NVQ Vocational and technical qualifications		
1	GCSE (grades 3-1 / D-G) BTEC Level 1 Certificate Level 1 NVQ Vocational and technical qualifications		
Entry Level (sub-levels 1-3)	Entry Level Certificate		

The UK has signed up to the [Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education](https://www.unesco.org/en/convention-on-recognition-qualifications-higher-education). Paris, 25 November 2019. (2022) Higher National qualifications are part of the [Framework for Higher Education \(FHEQ\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/framework-for-higher-education-fheq) Qualifications. This means that as the UK are part of the first United Nations treaty on higher education- and as HNCs and HNDs are part of the FHEQ, Higher Nationals are transferable to other education frameworks.

National frameworks do not mandate automatic admission, but by classifying the Higher Nationals at the higher-education level, they signal that it is an accepted qualification for higher study. Indeed, the Office for Students (OfS), which regulates higher education in England, includes HNDs in the list of prescribed higher education provision eligible for funding and recognition.

In summary, policy and framework documents from the Department for Education, Ofqual, and OfS all treat the HND as a recognised intermediate HE qualification, which underpins its wide acceptance as an entry route into university degree programs in [England, Wales, and Northern Ireland](#). Across the UK, qualification frameworks and government/agency policies formally acknowledge that HNDs are part of the higher education system and facilitate progression to university.

- [Regulated Qualifications Framework \(England & Northern Ireland\)](#) – Places HNDs at Level 5. The Department for Education’s framework guide and the Ofqual register identify HNDs as Level 5 credentials, signifying they carry the learning outcomes of two years of undergraduate study.
- Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and FHEQ – The QAA’s Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) for England, Wales and N.I. aligns with these levels as well. The QAA and higher education sector view HNDs as “short-cycle” higher-education qualifications, indicating they are intended to enable progression to the latter part of a bachelor’s degree. UKENIC details this in the [Guide to the UK education systems_final.pdf](#)
- [OfS and Funding/Recognition](#) – In England, the Office for Students treats HNDs as *approved higher education courses*. HND students qualify for undergraduate student finance and their courses are subject to the same regulatory oversight as

other HE courses. The Department for Education's 2025 guidance on OfS-funded provision explicitly lists Higher National Diplomas as recognised higher education alongside degrees and other awards. This formal recognition underscores that holding an HND is an acceptable academic route into university study (or further professional qualifications).

The [Qualifications can cross boundaries](#) document confirms the equivalency of Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals against the Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA). HND and HNC qualifications at RQF level of 4 and 5 respectively, correspond to Level 5 on the European Qualification Framework (EQF). The table below is taken from that document.



The UK remains a member of the ENIC-NARIC network (European Network of National Information Centres), which is tied to the Council of Europe/UNESCO recognition conventions rather than the EU. UK ENIC continues to compare UK and foreign qualifications. Through ENIC, the UK and EU countries share information about

qualifications, ensuring comparability is still maintained. UK ENIC comparisons often implicitly use frameworks like EQF to guide evaluations.

UK ENIC's (ECCTIS) role is to support understanding of UK qualifications internationally. They have provided information on Pearson higher qualifications in the context of the UK education system, and on how the UK system and credits align to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and ECTS. In the UK, they clarify 1 higher education credit typically corresponds to 10 notional learning hours and as such institutions may consider at their discretion, the Higher National Certificate to be broadly 120 credits, and the Higher National Diploma to be broadly 240 credits. One ECTS credit represents approximately 25–30 learning hours and thus 2–3 credits in the UK can be considered 1 ECTS. The transfer of UKCTS to ECTS is typically 2:1 therefore a complete HND (240 UKCTS) should be considered as 120 ECTS. For further information, please visit [Qualification Framework Status of BTEC qualifications-Ecctis](#)

Table 1 shows the correspondence of levels established between national qualifications frameworks and the EQF

European Qualifications Framework (EQF)	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and OfS sector-recognised standards for England (SRS)	Regulated Qualifications Framework England/ Northern Ireland (RQF)	Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW)	The National Framework of Qualifications for Ireland (NFQ IE)	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)
8	8	8	8	10	12
7	7	7	7	9	11
6	6	6	6	8/7	10/9
5	5/4	5/4	5/4	6	8/7
4		3	3	5	6
3		2	2	4	5
2		1	1	3	4
1		E3	E3	2/1	3
		E2	E2		2
		E1	E1		1

Yours sincerely,

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