

Mirroring degrees: BTEC for university preparation

Centre name:	St Simon Stock Catholic School	School type:	Academy, Roman Catholic School
Region:	Maidstone, Kent	Ofsted rating:	Good
Area type:	Town outskirts	Pupil premium %:	14%
Number of students:	1050	EAL %:	11%

Students who take a Level 3 BTEC National in the Sixth Form leave the school with the grades they need to go to university, and the practical skills they need to thrive when they get there.

St Simon Stock finds that the learning style of the BTEC Nationals mirrors university. Students are taught by a variety of teachers with different strengths and expertise for the optional units, keeping them engaged, and helping to develop a breadth of specialist knowledge and discover the areas that they want to pursue. BTEC Nationals also encourage students to become independent learners, and assesses them throughout the course with assignments and tasks, much like a university degree.

For teachers at the school, it is also the format of having assignments and assessments throughout the course which contributes to more of their BTEC students achieving the highest grades, compared with A Level students. Some students struggle with anxiety when under the pressure of exams. With BTECs there isn't one final exam which decides the student's grade - instead all the assignments and tasks throughout the qualification contribute. There are also opportunities to resit, giving students a chance to improve on their grades, and meaning that all students have the chance to achieve their true potential.

By offering the BTEC National in Sport instead of the A Level we've seen a **50% increase in cohort size in just one year.**

In terms of progression to university, BTEC National grades are equivalent to A Levels in terms of UCAS points (points for a Distinction* are the same as points for an A*). However, because the students taking BTECs are more likely to perform better on a course like this, they often have more options when it comes to progression to university.

Spotlight on Sport

Before offering the BTEC National in Sport, the sport department of St Simon Stock were losing students at Sixth Form, with only 3-4 students in a Sport A Level class. Their current Year 13 cohort for the BTEC is 10, and in Year 12 they now have 20 students, a 50% increase in students wanting to study the BTEC in just one year.

“It's a fantastic programme which gives students skills for life and gets them prepared for university. I personally recommend highly to all students.”

Mr Nimani, BTEC Sport teacher