



Creating a coherent Level 3 study programme for BTEC students

Quick guide

December 2025



Guidance on creating a coherent Level 3 study programme for BTEC students

In December 2024, the DfE announced that they are removing their previously stated rule that students can only take a maximum of one Alternative Academic Qualification (AAQ) as part of their Level 3 study programme in England.

We welcomed this announcement at Pearson, as schools and colleges are the ones that understand individual student's progression needs and interests, so are best placed to create meaningful and coherent study programmes for their students.



We also recognise there may be occasions when it is appropriate for students to take two or more BTEC Level 3 National (AAQs). For example:

<p>A student taking the following, with a view to progressing to a Speech and Language Therapy degree</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• BTEC Level 3 National (AAQ) in Early Childhood Development• BTEC Level 3 National (AAQ) in Applied Science• A level in English Language	<p>A student taking the following, with a view to progressing to a Software Engineering degree</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• BTEC Level 3 National (AAQ) in Computing• BTEC Level 3 National (AAQ) in Engineering• A level in Maths	<p>A student taking the following, with a view to progressing to a Psychology degree</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• BTEC Level 3 National (AAQ) in Health & Social Care• BTEC Level 3 National (AAQ) in Applied Science• A level in Psychology
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We have created this short guidance outlining some points worth considering when devising your students' study programmes, specifically where students may be taking more than one BTEC (AAQ) or equivalent.



Coherence

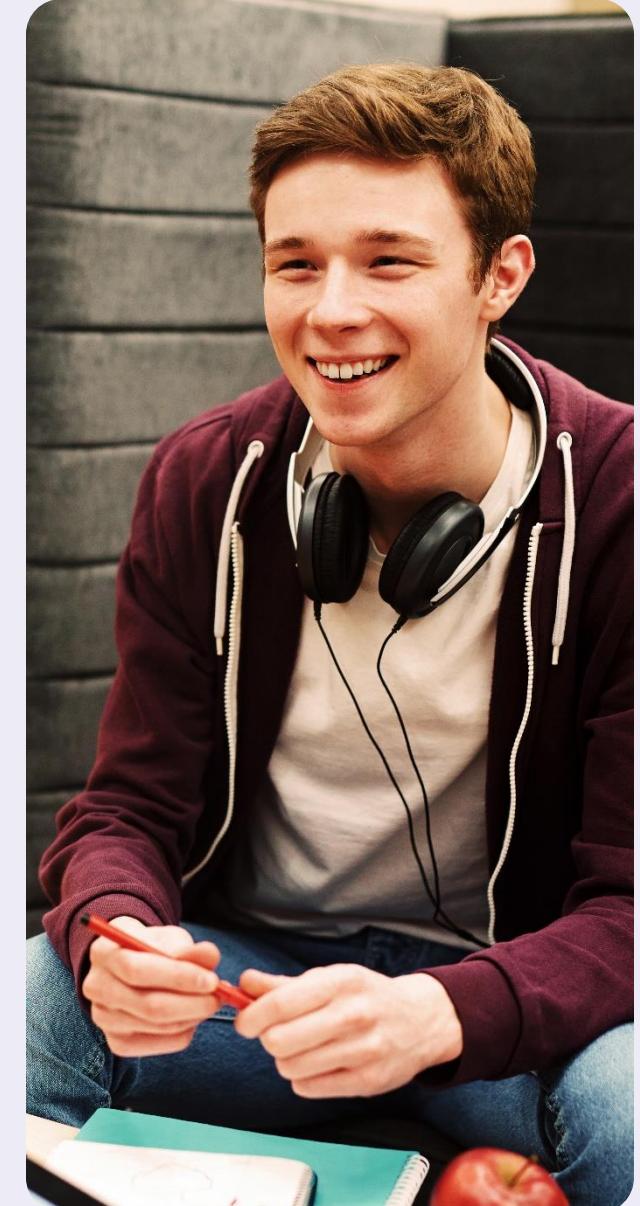
There are various factors to consider when devising a student's programme, including:

- their strengths, interests and intended progression destination
- whether they need to continue with English/Maths alongside
- any non-qualification activities they will be undertaking, e.g. work placement.

It is worth reflecting on which combination of subjects and qualifications best match their strengths, interests and intended progression destination and that complement each other.

If students are unsure about their intended progression destination, it is worth ensuring their study programme is broad to keep as many options as possible open.

We recommend avoiding combinations which feature a high proportion of overlapping content, as this will be less engaging for students and will not provide the breadth expected in a Level 3 study programme. For example, we do not think it would be appropriate to take an AAQ in Medical Science and Applied Human Biology, as both qualifications are fundamentally about human biology, so have a high amount of overlap.



Student progression

One of the most important considerations when devising a study programme is taking account of a student's intended progression outcome.

For example, many students taking the BTEC Level 3 National (AAQs) will be intending, or hoping, to progress to HE. It is essential to consider what the entry requirements are of potential institutions and their degree programmes. Entry requirements vary by institution.

For those intending to progress to HE, select subjects/qualifications that cover a broad range of content and skills relevant to their intended degree specialism(s). This will help maximise their chance of successfully progressing to HE.

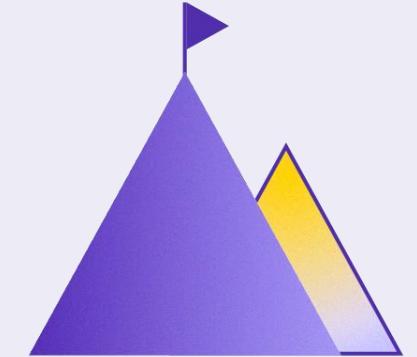
Some universities have subject-specific entry requirements, particularly for STEM-related degrees, where they may require students to have studied specific subjects and/or specific A levels.

At present, a few selective UK universities do not accept students with more than one vocational qualification at Level 3.

Where universities do accept students holding more than one BTEC qualification, they generally expect this to be in separate subject disciplines and do not accept combinations with a high degree of overlap, irrespective of UCAS points.

It is important to check that your student's intended destination(s) accept the combination(s) you are considering delivering.

Where students have yet to decide which university and/or degree they wish to progress to, it is worth asking your main recruiting universities for their views on your proposed combination.



Funding

Do check that the qualifications you intend to deliver are funded for new enrolments for the relevant academic year.

Please make sure that the study programme devised is in line with DfE requirements to be eligible for public funding.

→ [Refer to the DfE requirements](#)



School performance measures

DfE will announce in the future about the performance measure discount codes for qualifications eligible to count in future school performance measure tables. Please check their website for updates.

Please note in previous years, where “two or more very similar qualifications” from the same subject area are undertaken by a student, DfE said they will only count achievement from one of these qualifications in performance measures.

→ [Refer to the DfE 16-18 Performance Measures Discounting guidance](#)



Further information



DfE 16-19 study programme guidance	UCAS tariff FAQs	Informed Choices	BTEC Nationals (AAQs)
<p>Published annually – at the time of publishing this document, the guidance relates to 2024-25, but we expect this to be updated later in 2025. Irrespective of the year it relates to, it contains some useful information to consider when creating a study programme.</p> <p><u>→ Refer to DfE guidance</u></p>	<p>Published by UCAS, which includes helpful pointers on ‘What else I need to know about the UCAS tariff’, which may affect your planned study combination.</p> <p><u>→ Calculate your UCAS tariff points</u></p>	<p>Brought to you by the Russell Group, which provides advice to students intending to progress to HE, who either know which degree field they are interested in or have yet to decide. It provides suggestions on possible subjects to study at Level 3.</p> <p><u>→ Discover Informed Choices website</u></p>	<p>Each subject linked on the site has a ‘Statement of Purpose’, which outlines some of the potential degrees the qualification could lead to, and which subjects/ qualifications complement it.</p> <p><u>→ Explore BTEC Nationals 2025</u></p>

