

**Providing Access to  
High Quality Career  
Focused Education:**

BTEC Firsts Results  
October 2023



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# BTEC Firsts L2 qualifications


BTECs are rigorous, future-focussed, and globally recognised qualifications that equip learners of all ages with the knowledge, skills, behaviours, and confidence to succeed in a modern, skills-based economy. One in five UK working age adults have one or more BTECs, and 6 million learners have achieved a BTEC in the last decade.

The courses are developed hand-in-glove with employers. This approach ensures that not only are the learners set up for a successful transition into the workplace, but they will go into jobs that will help satisfy the UK economy's widening skills gaps. Included in the class of 2023 are many future healthcare professionals, engineers and construction workers who are so vital to the UK's economy.

BTEC Firsts provide both Key Stage 4 and Post-16 learners with the opportunity to take a vocational qualification in their chosen area of study.

In schools, learners have the opportunity to study a BTEC First Award (120 GLH) in their chosen subject as part of their wider KS4 programme of study. For post-16 learners BTEC Firsts offer learners the Certificate (240 GLH), Extended Certificate (360 GLH) or Diploma (480 GLH) as their main focus of study.

There is increasing demand from young people for BTEC courses in UK schools. The combination of traditional academic learning with vocational and transferable skills allows young people to prepare for the possibilities that will be opened to them as the careers of the future evolve.



# Context of the 2022/23 academic year

This academic year in line with the regulatory guidance from Ofqual the aim was to return to pre-pandemic performance standards and we had checks and balances in place to allow us to be sensitive to the disruption learners have faced.

BTEC courses have a different structure and design to academic qualifications – BTECs are modular qualifications (with assessments taking place throughout the course) compared to GCSEs and A levels which are linear (assessed and awarded at the same time at the end of the year).

The aim of all awarding bodies has been to ensure fairness for learners by neither advantaging or disadvantaging any one group of students compared to their peers. [Further information can be found here.](#)

When making comparisons to historical years we need to be mindful, as the context and aim of last academic year was to see it as a transition year before a return to pre-pandemic standards this academic year. There have also been significant changes in the cohort make-up and size from historical years.

As in every year, there was an appeals process in place.



# BTEC Firsts: Key Headlines

- As these are legacy qualifications, there has been a decrease in entry volumes across all qualification sizes as centres continue to transition to the L1/L2 Tech Awards.
- The First Award (120 GLH) size remains by far the most popular size. The First Award is equivalent to a GCSE and can be delivered alongside other KS4 qualifications.
- Sport, Music, Travel & Tourism, Business & ICT are the five most popular sectors.
- Overall outcomes have remained broadly stable with 2022.



# Introduction: Understanding BTEC First Results

## Qualification suites and qualification frameworks

The current suite of BTEC First qualifications at Level 1/2 (GCSE level) were developed to sit within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). These specifications were introduced for first teaching in 2012.

Although it is convenient to refer to NQF qualifications using the qualification framework applicable when they were developed, it should be noted that the current qualification framework is the RQF (Regulated Qualifications Framework), which was introduced in 2015.

## The academic year

The academic year for the purpose of this results publication is from 1 September to 31 August; results are grouped according to the academic year in which they are projected to complete the qualification.



# Introduction: Understanding BTEC Firsts Results

The following pages show the outcomes of BTEC qualifications for Level 1/2 Firsts for the academic year 2022/23. The outcomes from previous years have been included for comparison. Results from learners in all locations are included. This includes England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and all jurisdictions where learners are expected to complete these qualifications in the academic years reported.

## Cohort and Completion

The results published this year represent achievement for learners in UK schools and further education establishments (FE) for the 2022/23 full academic year. They represent learners at a cohort level, i.e. those that were expected to complete in 2022/23. This provides a picture of the results for BTEC Firsts over the year. Performance tables report on completion rates, so the inclusion of this data aligns these results closely with national reporting.

Learners' results may be reported as 'not completed' for a number of reasons: put simply, the student has not passed the qualification in the expected timeframe. However, it may be they are still studying for their qualification, or that a fallback Certificate of Unit Achievement was requested, or that they have withdrawn from the course.





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2023  
Learner  
completions

BTEC Firsts

Level 1/2  
qualifications



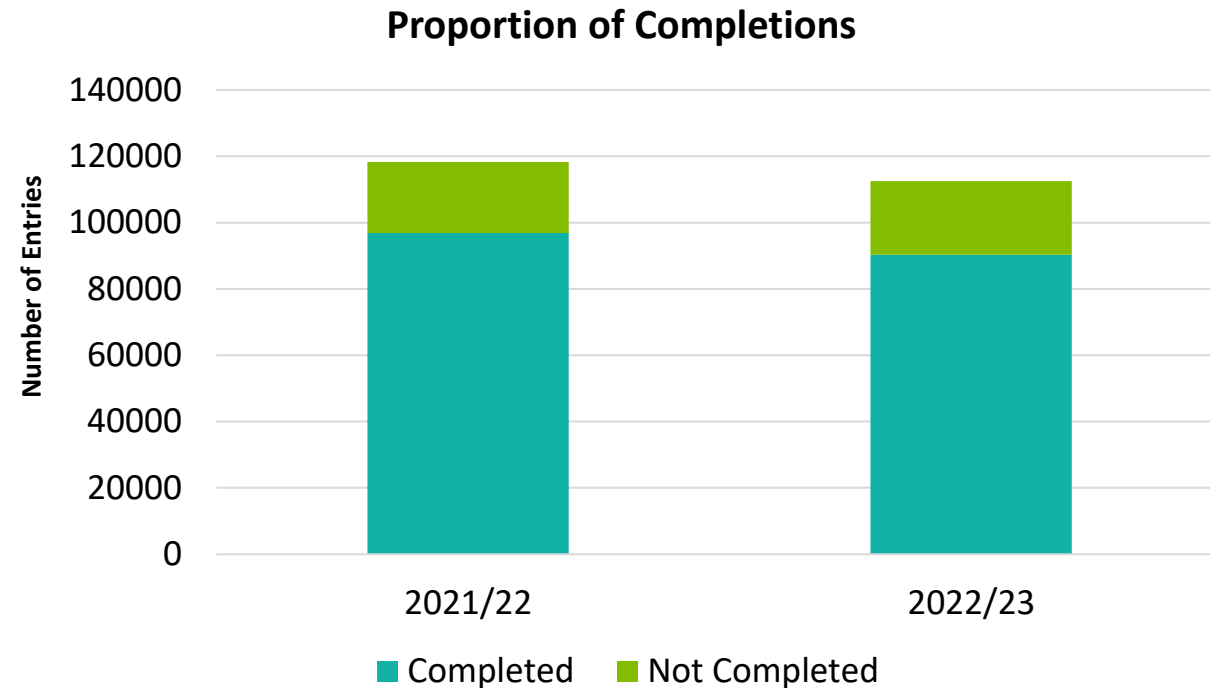


# Interest in completing a BTEC remains strong

## BTEC Firsts Cohort Overview

The size of the BTEC Firsts cohort as whole has decreased in 2022/23 compared to the previous year.

The introduction of the BTEC Tech Awards qualifications has continued to impact on the cohort volumes for the BTEC Firsts in some subject areas.



Completed: learners who completed by the end of the specified course duration and were awarded a qualification grade.

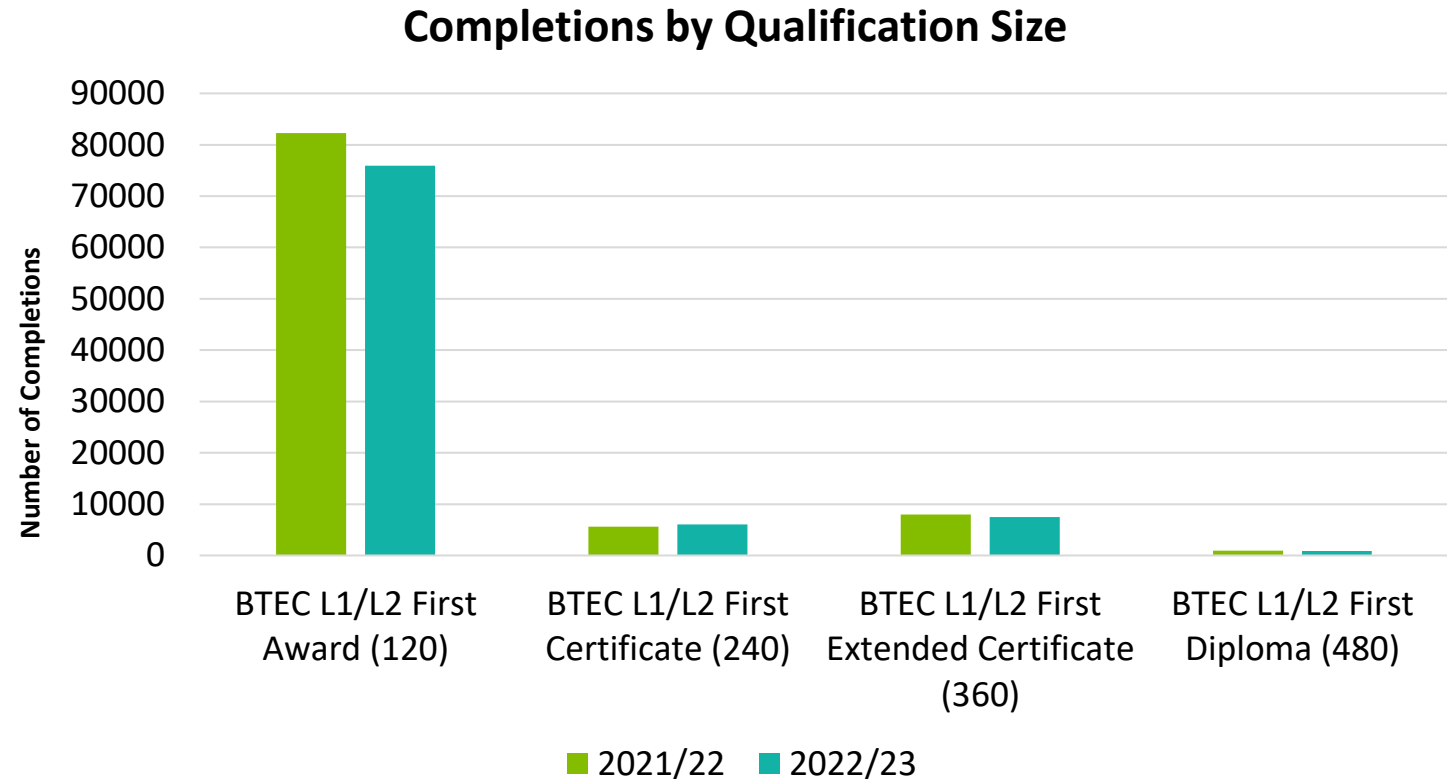
Not completed: learners who withdrew, claimed fallback, or were yet to complete at the end of the specified course duration.

# The BTEC First Award is most popular with learners

## Cohort Overview by Qualification Size

These figures show the different size (different GLH) qualifications available on the BTEC Firsts (NQF).

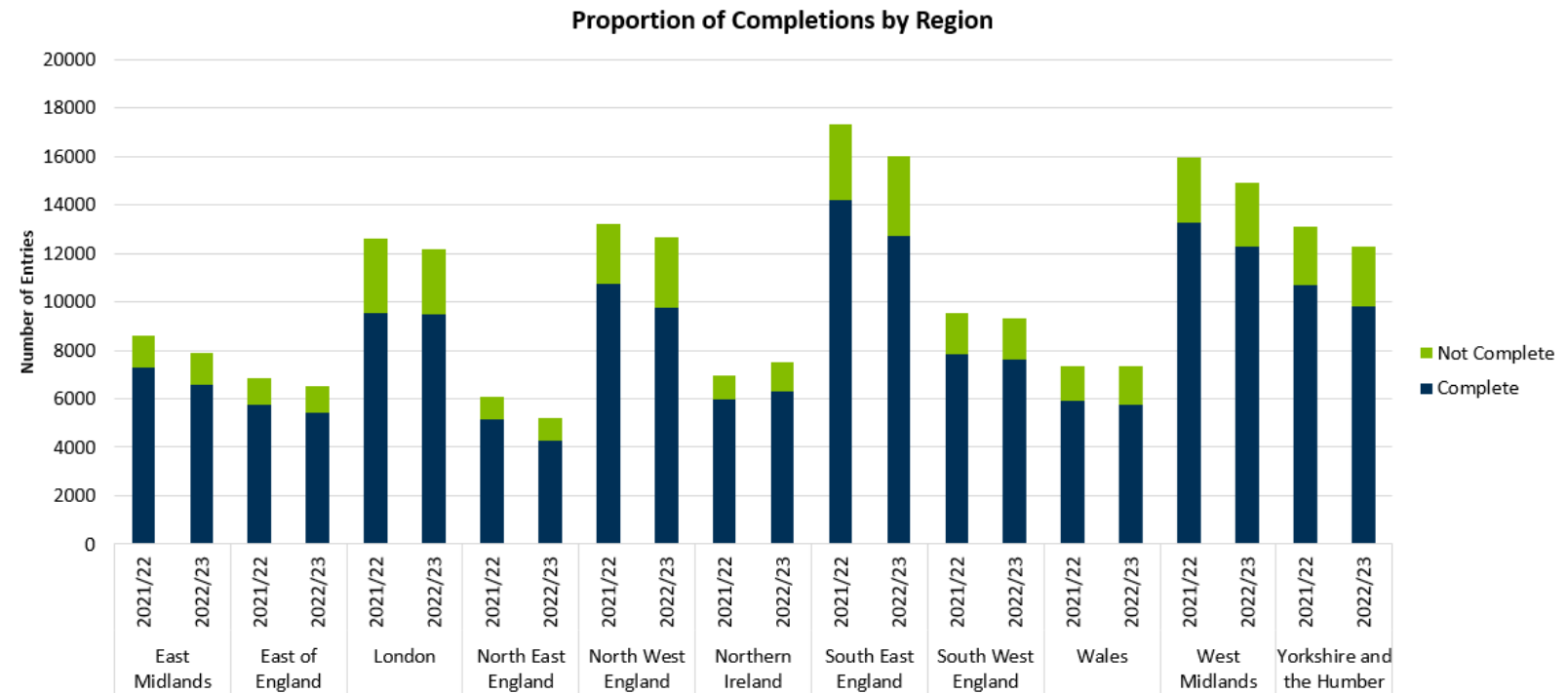
The First Award is the most popular size qualification for the BTEC Firsts. Most learners take this as a two year course.



# BTEC continues to appeal to learners nationwide

BTEC Firsts: an overview of volume by region

In 2022/23, as in 2021/22, South East England had the most learners and the West Midlands has the second highest number of learners



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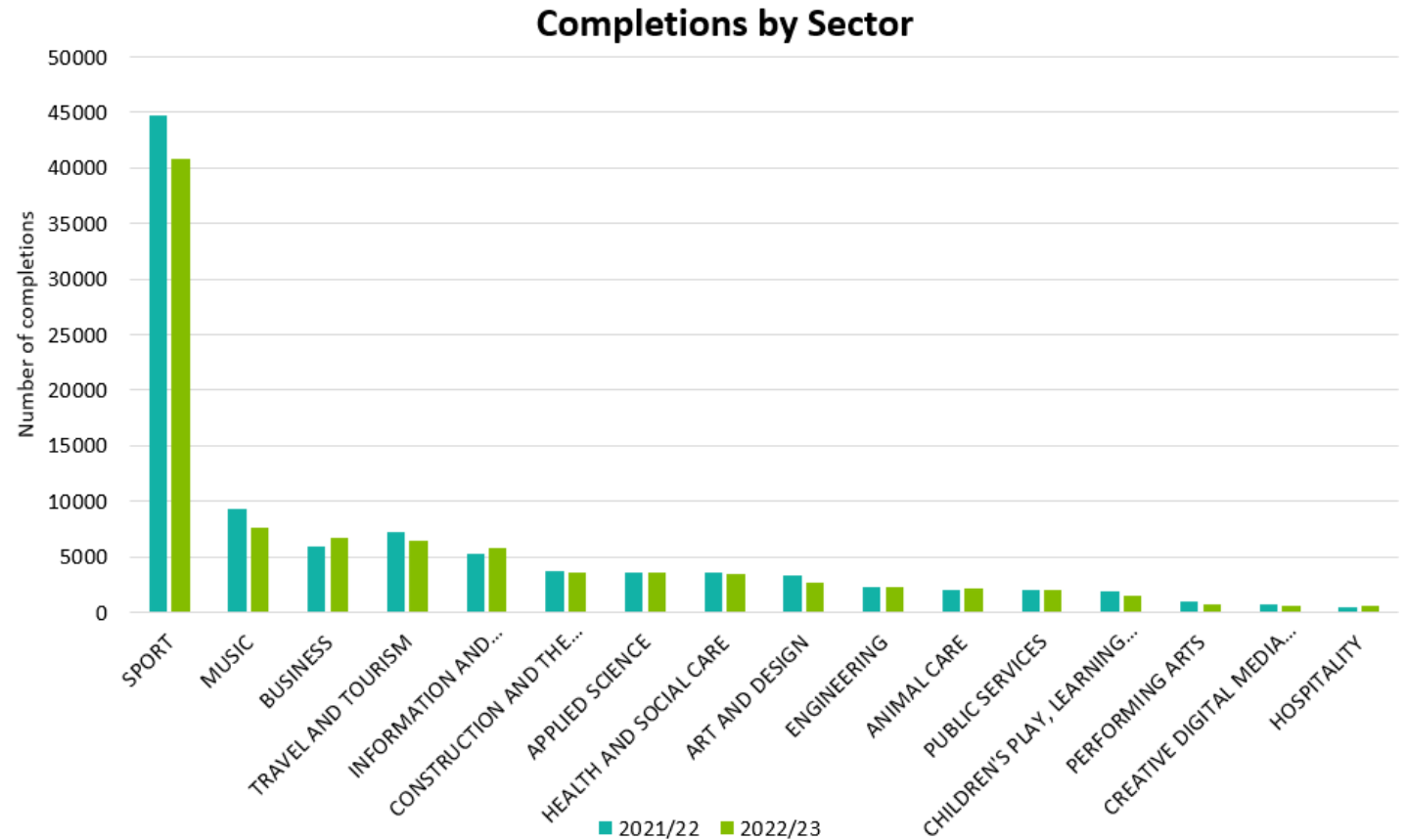
# Completions by Sector

## BTEC Firsts: completions by sector

The chart shows the number of completed qualifications for sectors with more than 250 learners.

Sport, the most popular subject in 2021/22 has seen a notable decrease in 2022/23, although remains the most popular by far.

Generally, there has been a decrease in the numbers taking all subjects, as centres migrate across to the new BTEC Tech Awards. Notable exceptions are Business and ICT.



# Popularity in subjects is across a diverse range of sectors

Sector	Cohort		Completion	
	2021/22	2022/23	2021/22	2022/23
Sport	52,200	48,800	44,700	40,800
Music	10,900	9,200	9,300	7,600
Business	8,000	8,900	5,900	6,700
Travel And Tourism	8,800	8,100	7,300	6,400
Information And Creative Technology	6,700	7,400	5,300	5,800

*Learners' results may be reported as 'not completed' for a number of reasons: put simply, the student has not passed the qualification in the expected timeframe. This is because they are still studying for their qualification, or that a fallback Certificate of Unit Achievement was requested, or that they have withdrawn from the course.*

BTEC Firsts: cohort and completion – top 5 sectors in 2022/23

There was a slight decrease in number of completions across the top sectors except for Business and ICT which increased in 2022/23

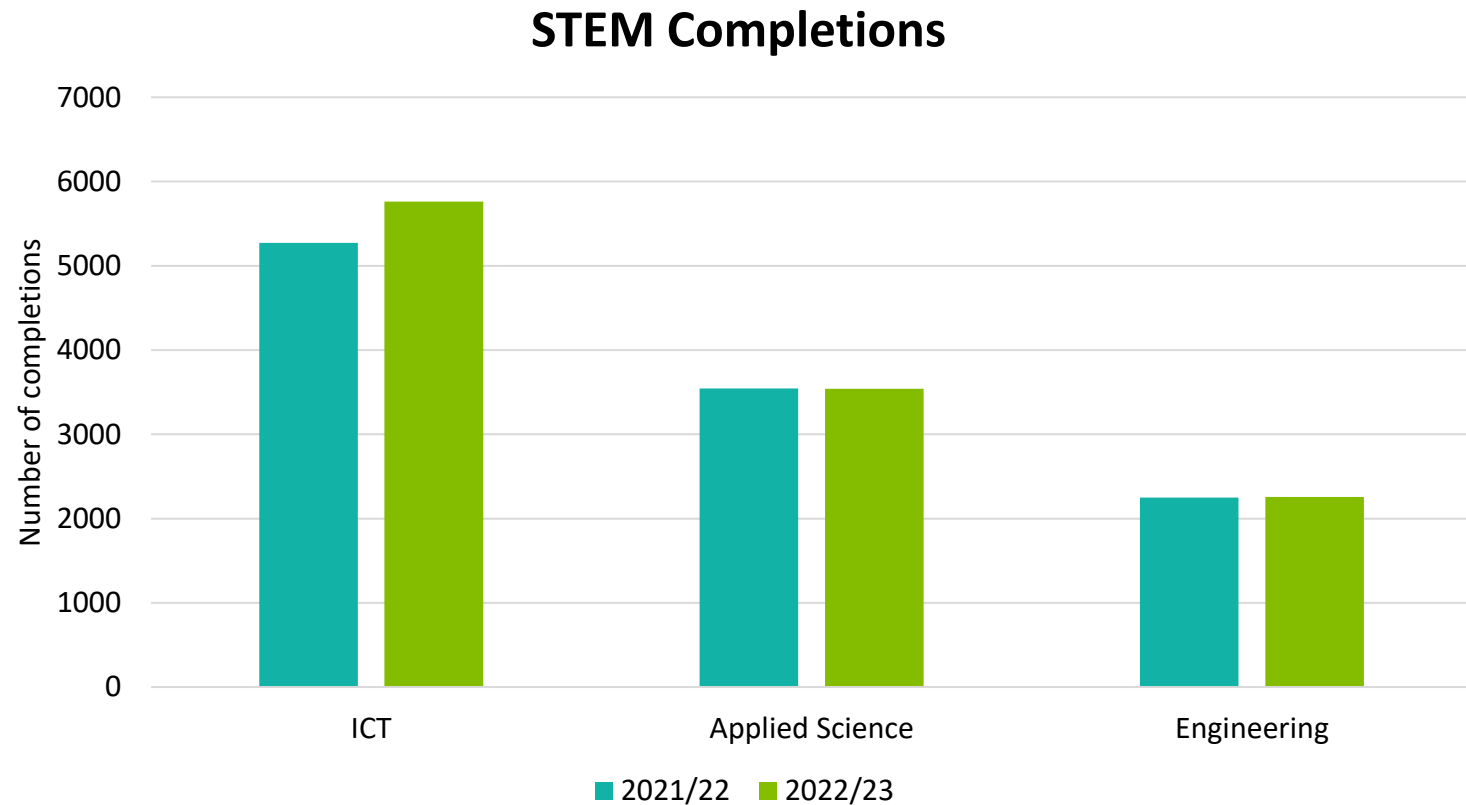
All these sectors are affected by growing numbers transitioning to the BTEC Tech Awards.



# Completions in STEM Sectors remain stable

BTEC Firsts: completions in STEM sectors

Completions figures for all STEM sectors are generally the same in 2022/23 as they were for 2021/22, though it has increased for ICT.



# Gender differences exist among subject choice



BTEC Firsts: 2022/23 top 5 sectors by volume and gender

Learners taking the most popular sectors on the BTEC Firsts are more likely to be male, as centres have adopted the BTEC Tech Awards for the sectors most popular with female learners, such as Health and Social Care. Results for the Tech Awards are published separately.

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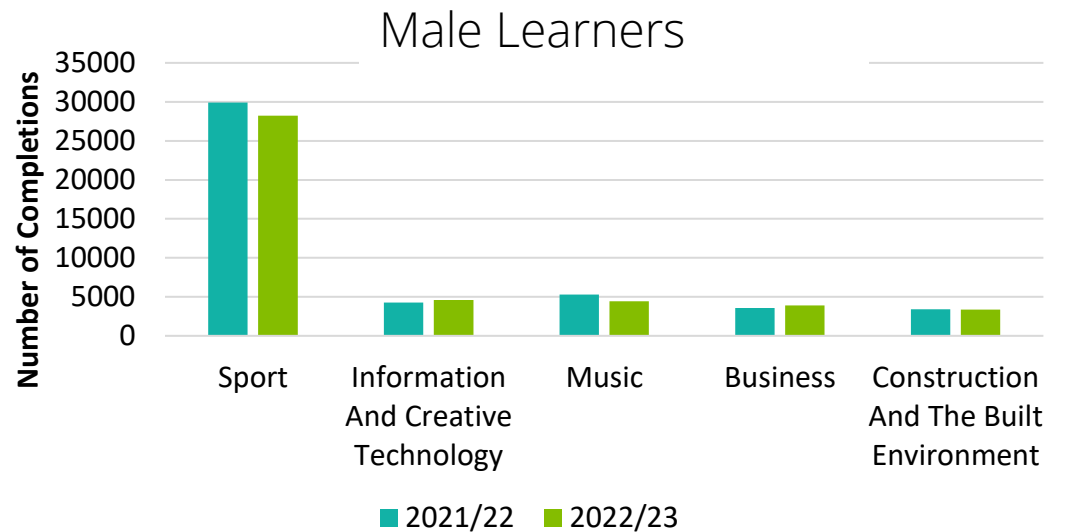
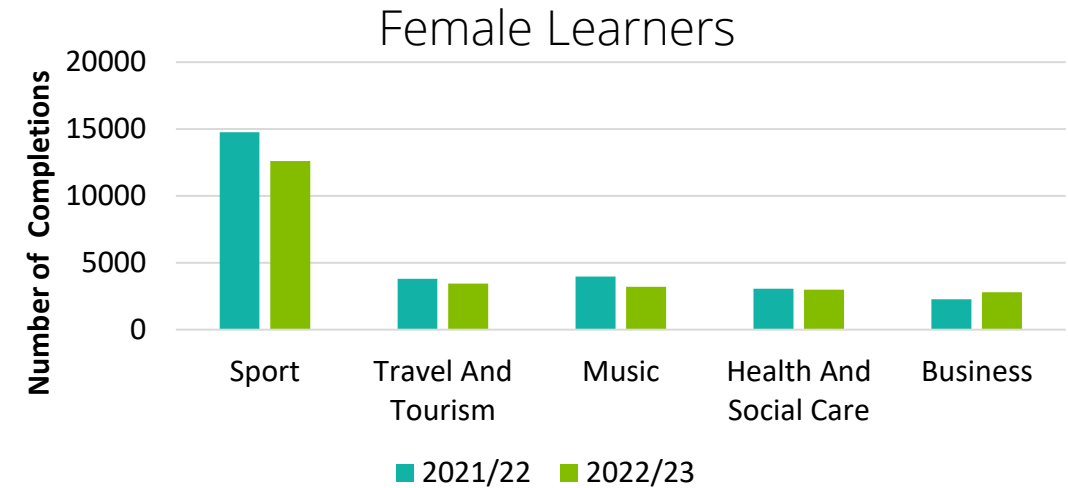
# Sport continues to be of interest to both male and female learners

BTEC Firsts: top 5 sectors for female and male learners by completion volume

Sport is the most popular sector for both male and female learners though the numbers in 2022/23 are have decreased in this sector, especially for female learners.

The BTEC Firsts in Health and Social Care are still popular with female learners, though many centres have adopted the BTEC Tech Awards.

The number of male learners is also fairly stable for ICT, Music and Business. Travel And Tourism is no longer in the top 5 – superseded by Construction





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# 2023 Learner achievement - BTEC Firsts

Level 1/2 qualifications  
Grade outcomes and  
technical reporting

# BTEC Level 1 / Level 2 Firsts (NQF) grades explained

Qualification Grade	Grade name
D*	Distinction Star
D	Distinction
M	Merit
P	Pass
L1P	Level 1 Pass
U	Unclassified

The BTEC Level 1 / Level 2 Firsts (NQF) have four grades at Level 2 (Distinction Star, Distinction, Merit and Pass) and one grade at Level 1 (Level 1 Pass).

Learners passing the First Award (120 GLH) at Level 2 are awarded single grades,

e.g. D. Learners passing the Certificate (240 GLH), Extended Certificate (360 GLH) or Diploma (480 GLH) at Level 2 are awarded double grades, e.g. DM.

Learners who have met the standard for a Pass at Level 1 but not at Level 2 are awarded a Level 1 Pass (1) on all sizes of the qualification.

Learners who have not met the standard for a Level 1 Pass are graded U (Unclassified) on all sizes of the qualification.



# BTEC Firsts achievement by year (single grades) - 2023

## BTEC Firsts achievement: grade distribution overview

For the BTEC First Award (NQF, 120 GLH). Grades at pass and above for these qualifications are awarded as a single grade, e.g. D. This table shows the percentage of learners on each grade, or with each outcome.

Year	Cohort	D*	D	M	P	L1P	U	Not completed
2021-22	98,200	14.4%	8.6%	23.0%	25.5%	10.3%	1.9%	16.2%
2022-23	92,600	13.2%	9.6%	22.4%	23.1%	11.6%	2.1%	18.0%

*The context and aim of awarding and grading in 2021/22 was to see it as a transition year with a stepped return to pre-pandemic standards. This academic year (2022/23) the aim has been to return to pre-pandemic standards, therefore comparisons to historical years should be viewed with caution.*

*Learners' results may be reported as 'not completed' for a number of reasons: put simply, the student has not passed the qualification in the expected timeframe. This is because they are still studying for their qualification, or that a fallback Certificate of Unit Achievement was requested, or that they have withdrawn from the course.*

# BTEC Firsts achievement by year (double grades) - 2023

## BTEC Firsts achievement: grade distribution overview

For these qualifications: Certificate (NQF, 240 GLH), Extended Certificate (NQF, 360 GLH), Diploma (NQF, 480 GLH). Grades at pass level and above for these qualifications are awarded as two grades, e.g. DM. This table shows the percentage of learners on each grade, or with each outcome.

Year	Cohort	D*D*	D*D	DD	DM	MM	MP	PP	L1P	U	Not completed
2021-22	20,000	1.5%	1.2%	2.0%	6.2%	9.2%	12.1%	26.3%	13.2%	0.9%	27.4%
2022-23	19,900	1.1%	1.2%	2.0%	7.2%	8.8%	12.3%	25.8%	13.2%	0.9%	27.4%

*The context and aim of awarding and grading in 2021/22 was to see it as a transition year with a stepped return to pre-pandemic standards. This academic year (2022/23) the aim has been to return to pre-pandemic standards, therefore comparisons to historical years should be viewed with caution.*

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# BTEC Firsts achievement by gender (single grades) - 2023

## BTEC Firsts achievement: gender and grade overview

For the BTEC First Award (NQF, 120 GLH). Grades at pass and above for these qualifications are awarded as a single grade, e.g. D. This table shows the percentage of learners on each grade, or with each outcome.

Year	Gender	Learners in the gender cohort	Gender cohort as a percentage of annual cohort	Percentage of gender cohort with each outcome						
				D*	D	M	P	L1P	U	Not completed
2021-22	Female	38,800	39.5%	18.9%	9.8%	23.0%	21.7%	8.3%	1.6%	16.7%
	Male	59,400	60.5%	11.5%	7.8%	23.0%	28.0%	11.7%	2.2%	15.8%
2022-23	Female	35,700	38.6%	17.1%	10.9%	22.3%	19.8%	9.3%	1.7%	19.0%
	Male	56,900	61.4%	10.8%	8.7%	22.6%	25.3%	13.0%	2.3%	17.4%

As in the previous year, there is a higher proportion of male learners than female learners. The shift to the new BTEC Tech Awards in subject areas of interest to female learners is one factor impacting on these proportions. Female learners' performance was better on average, with a higher percentage of female learners being awarded the highest grades (D and above).

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# BTEC Firsts achievement by gender (double grades) - 2022

## BTEC Firsts achievement: gender and grade overview

For these qualifications: Certificate (NQF, 240 GLH), Extended Certificate (NQF, 360 GLH), Diploma (NQF, 480 GLH). Grades at pass level and above for these qualifications are awarded as two grades, e.g. DM. This table shows the percentage of learners on each grade, or with each outcome.

Year	Gender	Learners in the gender cohort	Gender cohort as a percentage of annual cohort	Percentage of gender cohort with each outcome									
				D*D*	D*D	DD	DM	MM	MP	PP	L1P	U	Not completed
2021-22	Female	7,900	39.3%	2.2%	1.7%	2.5%	7.5%	10.1%	12.1%	24.2%	12.0%	0.7%	27.0%
	Male	12,200	60.7%	1.0%	0.8%	1.7%	5.4%	8.5%	12.2%	27.7%	13.9%	1.0%	27.8%
2022-23	Female	8,000	40.2%	1.7%	1.8%	2.7%	8.7%	9.4%	12.4%	23.3%	11.3%	0.8%	27.9%
	Male	11,900	59.8%	0.7%	0.8%	1.5%	6.2%	8.4%	12.3%	27.4%	14.4%	1.0%	27.3%

As in previous years, there is a higher proportion of male learners than female learners. In each year, female learners' performance was better across the range, with a higher percentage of female learners being awarded higher grades (MM and above) and a higher percentage of male learners being awarded lower grades (PP and below).

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# BTEC Firsts achievement: most popular sectors (single grades) - 2023

BTEC Firsts achievement: gender and grade overview for the 5 largest sectors

For the BTEC First Award (NQF). Grades at pass and above for these qualifications are awarded as a single grade, e.g. D. This table shows the percentage of learners on each grade, or with each outcome.

Sector	Gender	Learners in the gender cohort	Gender cohort as a percentage of annual cohort	Percentage of gender cohort with each outcome						
				D*	D	M	P	L1P	U	Not completed
Sport	Female	14,900	31.7%	23.3%	12.7%	22.5%	16.4%	7.0%	1.5%	16.6%
	Male	32,100	68.3%	14.5%	10.4%	24.3%	22.8%	10.6%	2.1%	15.2%
Music	Female	3,800	42.3%	18.5%	12.2%	24.0%	17.2%	9.2%	1.3%	17.5%
	Male	5,200	57.7%	11.6%	9.3%	24.4%	21.1%	15.3%	2.2%	16.1%
Business	Female	1,800	44.9%	8.8%	12.4%	21.0%	24.5%	10.2%	2.3%	20.8%
	Male	2,200	55.1%	6.6%	8.4%	20.9%	31.7%	12.0%	1.5%	18.9%
Travel and Tourism	Female	3,900	52.3%	14.5%	9.4%	23.7%	21.5%	9.5%	2.0%	19.3%
	Male	3,600	47.7%	6.4%	5.5%	17.2%	29.8%	16.5%	3.6%	21.1%
ICT	Female	900	29.9%	0.6%	16.5%	31.1%	22.1%	10.0%	1.2%	18.5%
	Male	2,100	70.1%	0.7%	10.5%	22.9%	29.6%	15.7%	1.9%	18.6%

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# BTEC Firsts achievement: most popular sectors (double grades) - 2023

BTEC Firsts achievement: gender and grade overview for the 5 largest sectors

For these qualifications: Certificate (NQF, 240 GLH), Extended Certificate (NQF, 360 GLH), Diploma (NQF, 480 GLH). Grades at pass level and above for these qualifications are awarded as two grades, e.g. DM. This table shows the percentage of learners on each grade, or with each outcome.

Year	Gender	Learners in the gender cohort	Gender cohort as a percentage of annual cohort	Percentage of gender cohort with each outcome									
				D*D+	D*D	DD	DM	MM	MP	PP	L1P	U	Not completed
Sport	Female	300	17.1%	1.3%	1.0%	1.6%	7.3%	8.9%	13.4%	24.9%	9.9%	0.3%	31.3%
	Male	1,500	82.9%	0.1%	0.2%	0.5%	4.3%	7.4%	11.4%	32.3%	12.6%	0.5%	30.5%
Music	Female	0	45.1%	4.9%	14.6%	2.4%	7.3%	0.0%	17.1%	17.1%	19.5%	7.3%	9.8%
	Male	100	54.9%	10.0%	6.0%	8.0%	2.0%	16.0%	10.0%	8.0%	18.0%	2.0%	20.0%
Business	Female	40	40.0%	1.5%	2.1%	2.8%	7.3%	9.6%	10.8%	23.5%	12.2%	0.8%	29.6%
	Male	90	60.0%	0.7%	0.9%	1.4%	5.1%	8.3%	11.9%	29.9%	13.3%	0.9%	27.5%
Travel and Tourism	Female	400	65.1%	1.5%	1.5%	4.1%	8.5%	9.0%	11.1%	24.9%	8.7%	0.3%	30.3%
	Male	200	34.9%	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%	5.3%	10.5%	12.4%	20.1%	15.8%	1.0%	32.1%
ICT	Female	600	14.1%	0.2%	0.6%	2.9%	13.8%	8.9%	9.1%	17.0%	16.3%	2.1%	29.1%
	Male	3,800	85.9%	0.2%	0.7%	2.3%	9.1%	8.7%	11.7%	24.2%	17.9%	1.6%	23.7%

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