

Top tips for implementing the Foundation project / Higher project / Extended project qualification alongside BTEC qualifications.

Rationale

Many centres that offer a range of BTEC qualifications across levels 1, 2 and 3 in a number of different curriculum areas recognise the advantages to learners of also allowing them access to the relatively new suite of project qualifications.

As these qualifications facilitate learners to understand the significance of carrying out relevant and reliable primary and secondary research, gain knowledge of accurate referencing and gain skills in time management and independent learning, these qualifications can support learners in attaining their BTEC qualifications at the highest possible grades and also gain skills that can be transferred into further study, employment or used in work experience placements.

The following tips may be useful in supporting BTEC centres in gaining the maximum benefit to their learners from implementing the project qualifications.

1. Project - What is it equivalent to?

BTEC centres can implement the project for their BTEC learners at any of the three levels.

The Foundation project is equivalent to half a GCSE at grades D to G. (please note that the actual Foundation project is graded at A* to B, A* being equivalent to GCSE at grade D, grade A project being equivalent to GCSE at grade E etc.)

The Higher project is equivalent to half a GCSE graded at A* to C and the Extended project is equivalent to half an A level graded at A* to U.

2. Which level is best for my students?

Generally, BTEC learners will benefit from undertaking the project at the same level as their BTEC course. So, for example, learners studying a BTEC First in Business would carry out the Higher project. Learners undertaking a BTEC National, for example in Performing Arts or Musical Theatre, would carry out the Extended project, as this is the level 3 programme of the project qualification.

However, centres can choose which level is appropriate for their own learners and may wish to enter some learners at a different level to their corresponding BTEC course.

3. How are students entered/registered for Project?

Learners need to be entered for their project qualifications in a similar way to how BTEC learners are registered. The centres examination officer generally carries this out through the on-line system (Edexcel Online).

For learners to be certificated in the January moderation series, learners need to be entered during the previous October. For certification in the summer series, learners need to be entered in the March of that year. For exact entry deadlines

please refer to the Edexcel project website. Please note that for learners carrying out either the Foundation project or the Higher project, entry is for the relevant project level. However, learners carrying out the Extended project need to be entered for the appropriate unit depending on whether they are undertaking a performance, making an artefact, carrying out a dissertation or an investigation.

The relevant units for the level 3 Extended project are listed below:

- P301 - Dissertation
- P302 - Investigation / Field Study
- P303 - Performance
- P304 - Artefact

4. How is work moderated?

Centres need to be aware that the project qualifications are moderated through the post and not through the SV system as is the case for all BTEC qualifications.

Learners project work must be sent to an allocated moderator by the due date as shown on the Edexcel project website. This coming year (2011) there are 2 opportunities for learners project work (at all three levels) to be moderated. One moderation window is in January and the second one is in May. Centres should check the Edexcel website for specific dates.

If work is not sent for moderation then learners will not be certificated for their project qualification.

5. How is the Project assessed and graded?

All 3 levels of project qualification are graded according to mark bands given for each assessment objective and not according to pass, merit or distinction outcomes, as is the case with BTEC qualifications.

Assessment of learner's projects should be carried out holistically. Helpful guidance to applying mark bands for all 3 levels of project is given in the relevant project specifications.

Centres are advised to fully acquaint themselves with the project specifications before embarking on the implementation of the course. These specifications can be downloaded from the Edexcel project website. There are also a variety of tools available to support centres in successfully implementing and assessing the project. These are available on this website such as downloadable pod casts from the Chief Examiner and learner materials that have relevant marking commentaries attached.

6. When is the best time to do a Project?

Most BTEC courses are undertaken over 2 academic years. Where this is the case, centres should carefully consider when the learners could carry out their project qualification.

One model is to allow learners to concentrate on their BTEC units for at least the first 2 terms of year 1. This supports learners in gaining knowledge of the relevant content and should then allow them to choose a project title that will extend this knowledge and take their BTEC learning forward.

Project titles could be agreed in term 3 of year 1 and relevant primary and secondary research could be undertaken over the summer. Learners could then

'develop and realise' (assessment objective 3) their projects over the autumn term of year 2 and submit them for moderation in the January of year 2, giving scope for a resit opportunity in the summer of year 2 if necessary.

7. What do I need to teach students?

Centres are asked to note that it is recommended that there is a taught element in all 3 levels of project. Learners need to be taught basic research techniques such as how to find reliable and valid secondary data, how to reference sources, how to use primary sources successfully etc and this taught element needs to be timetabled before project title choices are made. This may influence when in the BTEC calendar the qualification is run.

8. Can I link my Project title to my BTEC?

Many BTEC courses, across all levels, contain a research-based unit within their programme structure that all learners need to study. Whilst topic areas that are covered in these units can act as relevant and motivating springboards for project and Extended project title choices, learners will not be certificated for the separate project qualification if any of the same work is submitted from BTEC units for the project qualification.

If titles chosen for the project qualification are linked to subject matter studied within the learners BTEC course, then the material submitted for the project qualification must show extension of previous knowledge or new ideas prompted by previous learning. It is also entirely appropriate for BTEC learners to choose to study a project title that is completely different from their BTEC course although it is more usual for some linkage to be seen. This is useful for learners when giving a rationale for their project title choice as required by assessment objective 1.

9. Can I link Project to work experience?

Choice of project titles can also be influenced by any work experience that learners carry out throughout their BTEC courses. Some successful centres involve their work experience partners in teaching some of the skills required for successful projects to be carried out.

Centres can also invite employers into centres to attend the oral presentations on projects that learners are required to carry out for the level 3 Extended project.

10. Can students work in a group?

Many BTEC centres support their learners in carrying out very successful group work as evidence for some pass, merit and / or distinction criteria on various BTEC units.

Group work can be successful in the project qualification, particularly with respect to the Foundation and Higher projects and also with respect to unit 303 performance at level 3 (extended project). However, where group work is facilitated, centres must ensure that all learners have separate and different project objectives for each learner in the group. This will ensure that all learners develop and realise their own relevant part of a group project title.

Where group work is carried out, peer review of each individual's contribution to the project is a valuable tool for learners to use as part of the evidence for the review - assessment objective 4. Where group work is carried out all learners must submit their own, individual project proposal form and activity log as part of the

evidence for assessment objective 1. This evidence can show the overall group project title but must reflect the individuals roles and responsibilities.

Additional Support

The project is a very rewarding qualification for both tutors and learners and will support attainment across all BTEC courses across all levels and curriculum areas.

The Project website has a wide range of support materials and is regularly updated, and can be found at the following link: www.edexcel.com/project

Centres are encouraged to use the project 'Ask the expert' website for further assistance or e-mail ProjectQualification@EdexcelExperts.co.uk for assessment related queries and further guidance.