

**BTEC learner**

# Simran Singh



## ***'My BTEC made me a more focused person'***

*Simran Singh studied for a BTEC in Applied Science before going on to gain a degree from the University of Hertfordshire in Astrophysics. Now 22, she is currently studying for a MSc - also in Astrophysics.*

*We spoke to Simran about her learning journey and her BTEC experience.*

### **How do you think studying a BTEC helped get you where you are now?**

I was unable to do A levels as my Maths and Science GCSE grades were not high enough, so BTEC was my next option. The BTEC was incredible in the sense that it thoroughly prepared me for all the lengthy writing you get with assignments and reports. The BTEC also taught me a lot of key principles in the sciences that I have used in the duration of my degree.

### **Can you describe your BTEC experience? What was it like?**

I was very worried at first as there was some stigma from my peers around doing a BTEC, but my teachers reassured me that BTEC was an ideal option for my chosen career path. After the initial week or so, I got into a routine with my timetable and studying and I was incredibly happy with my work placement. The BTEC went so well for me, and I really enjoyed it, and I ended up getting DDM in the end.

### **How did studying a BTEC prepare you for the career you would like to go into?**

There are many reports that astrophysicists must write up, which are usually exceptionally long and extremely detailed. Doing the BTEC really prepared me for this type of extended writing and helped me develop crucial skills such as formatting, layout, and Harvard referencing. ▶

## What did you like most about taking a BTEC?

My favourite thing about the BTEC was Physics classes. I am naturally drawn to Physics so while we only had one hour per week in this subject I really looked forward to it. Doing the numerical assignments instead of a report was also a plus as I enjoy calculations and written work as opposed to standard essays and reports.

Another thing I really enjoyed was the variety of laboratory work. All three sciences included many hours of lab work, and it was so much fun and extremely interesting. I have to say, titrations are my favourite lab work.

## Would you recommend taking a BTEC?

I would recommend doing a BTEC, especially if you wanted to do A levels and did not get the grades. It is a very hands-on course and if you do Applied Science like me, trust me you will not be missing out.

## How would you say your confidence has changed since taking a BTEC? Has it made you more of a leader or focused your ambitions in any way?

Doing a BTEC made me a more focused person, and after my BTEC I did a foundation year as I needed more maths skills, and then completed my Bachelors. If

it were not for my BTEC and the constant assurance and push from my teachers, I do not think I would have completed my degree in Astrophysics.

## What are your career ambitions for the future?

I am currently doing my MSc in Astrophysics, and I might go on to do a PhD, but later in life. I think if I get the opportunity, I would like to work at the Centre for Astrophysics Research (CAR) at the University of Hertfordshire.

## What did you learn most from a BTEC?

Discipline. Going from secondary school to college was a wake-up call to my independence. Things like relying on my parents to get me up in the morning had to change as I had to leave the house earlier. Setting my own alarm and sorting out my lunch and travel were things I did not have to think about before!

Attendance and punctuality are taken so seriously at college and to be honest, if the teachers were not strict at college, I would have missed a lot more lectures than I did at university because no one cares about your attendance there. If you do not turn up to a lecture it makes no difference to anyone but yourself. Self-discipline is something that cannot be taught by someone else, you must realise, and learn it yourself. I honestly believe my BTEC really aided me in figuring it out. ■