

Pearson BTEC International Level 3 Qualifications

UK NARIC's independent evaluation and benchmarking of the Pearson BTEC International Level 3 qualifications has found the following comparability in the context of the UK education system¹:

Pearson international qualification	Comparable RQF level	Comparable qualification
Pearson BTEC International Level 3 Certificate	3	National BTEC (RQF) Certificate
Pearson BTEC International Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma	3	National BTEC (RQF) Extended Certificate
Pearson BTEC International Level 3 Foundation Diploma	3	National BTEC (RQF) Foundation Diploma
Pearson BTEC International Level 3 Diploma	3	National BTEC (RQF) Diploma
Pearson BTEC International Level 3 Extended Diploma	3	National BTEC (RQF) Extended Diploma

Context and scope

Pearson Education Ltd (Pearson) has developed a suite of International BTEC Level 3 qualifications for international delivery starting in April 2020². These qualifications are designed for post-16 learners to support progression to further study or employment in a sector or field.

In November 2019, UK NARIC completed an independent benchmarking study to compare the International BTECs to the RQF aligned Pearson National BTECs.

¹ RQF Level 3 qualifications can be considered suitable for admission to undergraduate studies. Level 3 on the RQF is referenced at Level 4 on the EQF (Reference: *Referencing the Qualifications Frameworks of the United Kingdom to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)*).

² The subjects available from April 2020 are Applied Science, Art and Design, Business, Construction, Creative Media, Engineering, Hospitality and Catering, IT, Land-based (Agriculture and Horticulture), Music, Performing Arts, Production Arts, Travel and Tourism, and Sport.

Overview of the International BTECs

Entry requirements

There is no formal entry requirement to the International BTECs but learners should generally have qualifications at or equivalent to RQF Level 2 standard (i.e. International GCSEs).

Structure and Content

For each subject area, the International BTECs are offered in the following five qualification sizes, with various guided learning hours (GLH):

- Certificate (180 GLH)
- Subsidiary Diploma (360 GLH)
- Foundation Diploma (540 GLH)
- Diploma (720 GLH)
- Extended Diploma (1080 GLH).

Each of the five qualifications consists of a set of mandatory and optional units. All of the qualifications, except for the Extended Diploma,

are intended to be taken as part of a wider programme (i.e. alongside other International BTECs or international A-levels); the Extended Diploma is intended to be taken as a two-year full-time programme.

Assessment and Grading

Many of the International BTEC mandatory units are assessed through assignments set by Pearson, and internally marked at the centre. Other unit assignments are designed and marked by the individual centre.

All units are marked on a grading scale of Distinction (D), Merit (M), Pass (P) and Unclassified (U).

The final overall grade for the qualification is based on the aggregate grade across the units as follows:

Qualification size	Grade range
Certificate, Subsidiary Diploma, Foundation Diploma	P to D*
Diploma	PP to D*D*
Extended Diploma	PPP to D*D*D*

Key findings – content, key skills assessed and assessment methods

A comparative review of the content taught within the mandatory units for the Extended Diploma in both the International BTEC and National BTEC (RQF) identified a similar breadth and depth of topics covered within the units. Some differences were noted in the units set as mandatory or optional, but all National BTEC (RQF) mandatory units were available as either a mandatory or optional unit in the International BTEC. Minor differences in topic coverage reflected the International BTECs being adapted for international delivery with greater emphasis on the global context and fewer topics being UK focussed.

In terms of assessment, both BTEC suites of qualifications are assessed using similar methods, including examinations, reports, presentations, and a range of activities or investigations that

allow the learner to interact with real-life scenarios or draw on work-placements, where possible.

Both the International BTEC and National BTEC (RQF) units employ internal assessment, where assignments are set and marked by individual centres according to general guidelines, learning aims and criteria set by Pearson.

There are differences in the marking, with the International BTEC units marked by centres, using assessment criteria and descriptors that provide information on making assessment decisions; whilst the National BTEC (RQF) qualifications include a number of externally assessed units that are marked by Pearson. Nonetheless, a comparative review of the assessment and grading criteria highlighted that the key skills required to achieve a passing grade within these units are broadly similar between the two BTEC suites of qualifications. Overall, students are generally expected to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the subject area and the main content covered within the unit; application of this knowledge and some analysis or knowledge of analytical tools is also similarly expected, depending on the unit.

Methodology

Based on UK NARIC's well-established methodology for credential evaluation, this independent evaluation and benchmarking study comprised a detailed review of the International BTEC qualifications, using a sample of BTEC subjects³, in terms of:

- Entry requirements
- Duration, including guided learning hours
- Content and structure
- Modes of learning and assessment
- Learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- Associated outcomes.

Quality assurance and control mechanisms and processes were also considered for the purposes of UK NARIC determining comparability.

³ Business, Travel and Tourism, Engineering and Hospitality and Catering.