Guide to Writing Assignment Briefs for BTEC Tech Awards

A quick guide for the BTEC teaching team

Contents

1. Introduction

If you are new to teaching BTEC, this guide should provide you with a handy guide to the basics of Assignment Brief writing so you can devise Assignment Briefs that lead to creative and successful assessment opportunities for your learners.

If you are an experienced BTEC practitioner, you should also find this Guide useful as a quick reference to the specific requirements for BTEC Tech Award – or as a starting point for helping colleagues new to your BTEC teaching team.

If you have any questions, or want to discuss your individual needs and requirements with a BTEC expert, you can **contact us**. You can also find further assessment guidance in the BTEC specification for your subject.
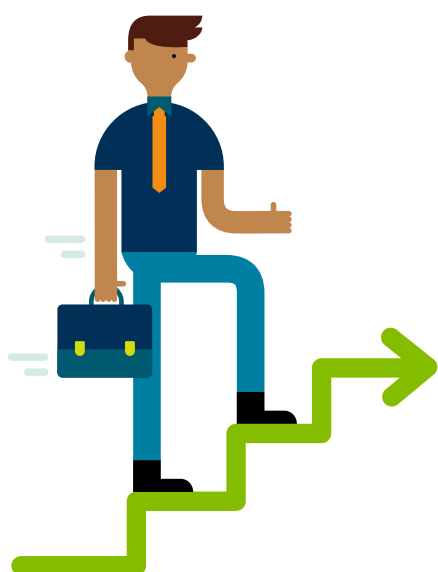
BTEC Tech Award qualifications are made up of individual components which cover specific topics and contain:

- **Learning Aims** are statements indicating the scope of learning for the component*

- They provide a holistic overview of the component when considered alongside the component content.

- **Assessment Criteria** state the grade descriptors at which the learner can achieve each learning aim.

Learners studying the internally-assessed components need to **generate evidence that they have met the learning aims and assessment criteria** specified for each component.

Component - Definition

Components are the building blocks of BTEC Tech Award qualifications. The content of a component gives the basis for the teaching, learning and assessment for each learning aim and covers:

- **knowledge**, including definition of breadth and depth

- **skills**, including definition of qualities or contexts

- **applications**, through which a learner provides evidence of knowledge and/ or skills.

* In Tech Awards, Units are called Components.

2. What are Assignment Briefs?

Assignments are assessments designed to:

> **demonstrate a learner's knowledge, skills and understanding in a defined area of study**

> **measure evidence of their learning** against the:
> **learning aims**
> (what the learner needs to know, understand and do)
> **assessment criteria**
> (the grade level at which the learner can achieve each learning aim).

so that your final assessment decisions meet the National Standard.

For the learner the Assignment Brief should:

- Motivate and support the learner toward meeting the assessment and grading requirements of the component and be accessible.

- A well-designed brief will do this through the choice of project, learner roles or evidence required.
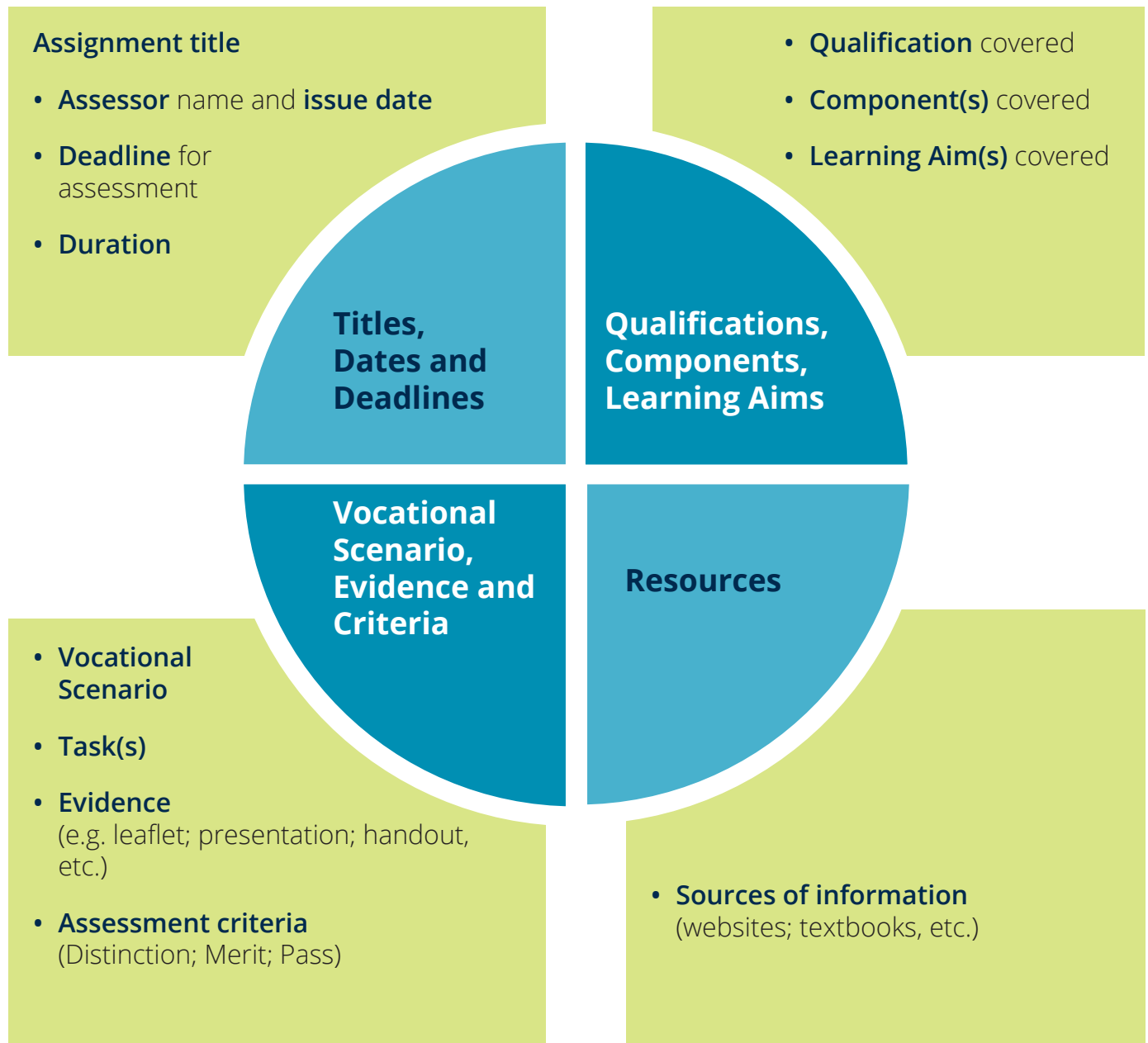
The Assignment Brief must be well presented, easy to follow and provide clear and **unambiguous guidance** to the learner.

Assessors need to consider the needs of the cohort in order to ensure the Assignment Brief is **accessible and inclusive** for learners at the level of the component. This may entail **structuring the assignment** to enable learners to understand the scenario, tasks and evidence requirements and considering the choice of vocabulary and phrasing, as well as the overall layout to meet the **individual needs** of each learner in the cohort.

3. What information does an Assignment Brief need to include?

There is no prescribed format or sequence for an Assignment Brief, but it must include the following key information:

Assignment title

- **Assessor** name and **issue date**
- **Deadline** for assessment
- **Duration**

- **Qualification** covered
- **Component(s)** covered
- **Learning Aim(s)** covered

Titles, Dates and Deadlines

Qualifications, Components, Learning Aims

Vocational Scenario, Evidence and Criteria

Resources

- **Vocational Scenario**
- **Task(s)**
- **Evidence**
(e.g. leaflet; presentation; handout, etc.)
- **Assessment criteria**
(Distinction; Merit; Pass)

- **Sources of information**
(websites; textbooks, etc.)

Learning Aims

When you set an Assignment for a Tech Award qualification:

✓ it must cover the **whole learning aim**

✓ you **can cover more than one learning aim** within your assignment

✗ you **cannot cover just part** of a learning aim within an assignment

✗ you **cannot split the achievement of learning aims** across different assignments.

The importance of deadlines

Clear instruction allows learners to plan and structure activities, and respond to deadlines as they would in employment.

Remember

- You need to set a clear submission deadline for your assignment.

- The Assessor must set and record a date for assessment (hand in date) in their assessment plan.

- The Assessor is the person who will mark the work handed in. This could be the Lead Internal Verifier or any member of the team that has been standardised by the Lead IV.

- Assignments must be internally verified as fit for purpose before being issued to learners.

- Both the Assignment and the Assessment Plan provide a record of how the component is being assessed, when and by whom.
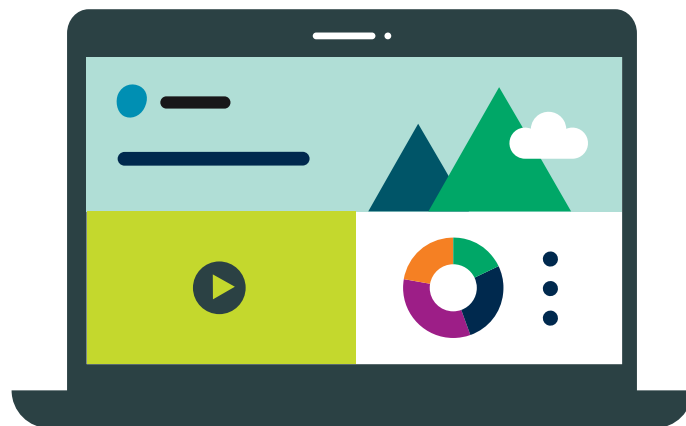
4. Vocational Scenarios

A scenario is a necessary feature of the Assignment Brief providing a rationale and vocational focus for the assessment activities.

A well-designed scenario will aim to contextualise assessment activity within the world of work, and reflect typical activities and roles in the sector.

An effective scenario gives a framework for the tasks and evidence and will motivate learners. A scenario could be a 'real' work opportunity for assessment, such as a commission brief, a case-study based on factual or fictionalised information, or a simulation designed to mirror industry practices.

Planning

- When planning an assignment, Assessors should look at the **focus of the assessment** by analysing the learning outcomes/aims and assessment and grading requirements in the related criteria.

- A vocationally-based scenario or context can then be developed. This may be specific job role within the sector, or a theme, or a case study, or a context statement - for example relating the assignment to the learner's training and development within the sector.

Level

The scenario or context must be **realistic** and **appropriate** to the level of learner. For example, asking Level 2 learners to simulate a senior management or consultancy role is likely to be unduly challenging. The scenario should be factually correct in reflecting actual industry practice, and where a case study is used, making sure background information and data are accurate.

Relation to the component

Good practice in devising an assignment scenario should clearly **link the scenario to the tasks** with a logical progression of the scenario through the flow of tasks and evidence. Unsatisfactory practice would be writing a general overview of the purpose of the assignment and component or quoting directly from the introduction section of the component specification. A scenario must be specific and relevant to the needs and interests of your learners.

Localisation

For some components, Assessors might make **effective use of local resources** as a context for an Assignment. This could draw on local employers and organisations to provide commissions, case-studies or research material.

5. Tasks

Assignment tasks are a detailed description of specific activities learners will carry out and states the evidence they will produce in order to address the target assessment criteria.

It is important that the design of the Assignment Brief clearly references the tasks to the assessment and grading criteria they address. This will enable the learner to see how they are being assessed and to determine the quality of evidence they need to produce in order to achieve each targeted criterion.

The design and wording of assignment tasks are very important. The assessment and grading criteria should not themselves be simply replicated as tasks; rather the tasks must interpret the requirements of the criteria into meaningful and vocationally relevant activities and evidence.

Tasks will also need to ensure coverage of the breadth and depth of relevant information taken from the teaching content section of the specification. Whilst a learner is not expected to provide assessment evidence for all the teaching content, this serves as a guide toward assessment coverage and Assignments should ensure that sufficient and relevant elements of the content will be covered to address the targeted criteria. For BTEC Tech Awards, tasks should target the full range of criteria from Level 1 Pass to Level 2 Distinction.

It is important that the vocabulary used is accurate and appropriate to the vocational sector. This will often entail using terminology found in the component content.

Learners may be assisted by providing a **glossary or definition** of new and unfamiliar terms. Similarly, Assessors may provide guidance on the demands of the target criteria, for example, defining in learner-friendly language what constitutes 'analysis' or 'assess'; care needs to be taken however not to provide excessive prompting.

Tasks checklist

☐ **Write tasks which cover the full range of criteria in the learning aim**
Tasks must be written to cover the **range** of relevant criteria, from **L1 Pass** to **L2 Distinction**.

DO NOT split your tasks into one for Pass criteria, another for Merit criteria, and one for Distinction criteria.

☐ **You can create more than one task in an assignment**
If you have more than one task, each one must span the range of criteria from L1 Pass to L2 Distinction.

☐ **You can split your task into sub-parts**
If you split your task into sub-parts, you must still list the individual assessment criteria together at the end of the task.

DO NOT list individual assessment criteria for Pass, Merit or Distinction next to a sub-part of a task. The task as a whole must span the full range of assessment criteria from L1 Pass to L2 Distinction.

☐ **You should give clear guidance on how to complete the task**
You should find a balance in giving guidance in the tasks – not too vague, but also not a step-by-step list that doesn't allow the learner to work independently. For examples of best practice on how to write tasks and Assignment Briefs, you can refer to the Pearson Authorised Assignment Briefs for your qualification.

Remember

Tasks should:

- Include a detailed description of what the learner will do to produce evidence to address the targeted grading criteria.

- Be clear, specific, relevant and realistic.

- Reference the specific criteria they address.

- Address the targeted criteria but not simply repeat the wording of the grading criteria.

TIPs:

- Pay particular attention to the operative verb (command verb) of each criterion.

- Refer to the Essential Information for Assessment Decisions section of the component specification to check tasks are likely to generate sufficient and appropriate evidence.

6. Evidence

The evidence required must be clearly listed against each task. A variety of evidence forms can be used when assessing components:

Presentations

Practical Performance

Written Reports

Log Books

Production Diaries

Blogs

Artefacts

Articles for journals, magazines or websites

This list is by no means exhaustive. The evidence should be appropriate to the tasks and allow for clear coverage of the targeted assessment and grading criteria.

Tips

- It is good practice to vary the assessment methods used, in order to keep the programme interesting and engaging for the learners.

- Think of technological innovations – blogs, vlogs, viva voces, twitter feeds which can be used by learners as evidence for assessment.

7. Assignment Writing Checklist

☐ **Identify the natural links** across the assessment criteria using the grid in the specification.

☐ For each criterion, **note the related areas of Teaching Content.**

☐ **Check and apply the direction given** under 'Essential Information for Assessment Decisions section, e.g. 'For Level 2 Pass, learners should describe the most recent …'.

☐ **Check any number instructions** under the above or within grading criteria, e.g. 'For Level 2 Pass learners will identify two organisations within …', or 'To achieve Level 2 Merit, learners should give examples of at least three …', or 'To achieve Level 2 Distinction, learners should address all the areas of *** given in the content.'

☐ **Consider an appropriate scenario and role for the learner.** Provide as much background information as is necessary to make it as 'real' as possible. The initial scenario may be further developed under each task/subsequent assignment, e.g. Component X – You work for … and the newly appointed manager … has noted that the records show an increased amount of customer complaints over the last year and his/her own initial contact with staff has not impressed him/her. You, as a trainee manager, have been asked to prepare materials for a staff development session to remind staff of how important customer service is…..

☐ **Consider the type of assessment evidence** to be generated by the learner and how you can add interest and variety, e.g. task 1 might be a leaflet, 2 a presentation, 3 a vlog.

☐ **Write the tasks**, giving appropriate direction, advice and guidance to enable learners to produce the evidence required.

☐ When listing the assessment criteria, **make sure this is stated verbatim** from the specification.

☐ **Identify any sources of information** considered appropriate, such as journals, websites, reference materials, etc.

☐ **Set reasonable deadline(s)** ensuring that learners have been given the opportunity to be taught and learn the skills required for assessment.

8. Further Support

Authorised Assignment Briefs

We have produced a range of Authorised Assignment Briefs which you can:

- use **'off the shelf'**

- **edit** and **adapt** to suit your individual programme and local needs.

Authorised Assignment Briefs are available for all components. They can be found under the Course Materials section on the qualifications specification page on the Pearson website.

Even if you do not use the Authorised Briefs for your assessments, we **strongly recommend** that you **read them** before you write your own to familiarise yourself with the format and with what constitutes good practice for writing Assignment Briefs for BTECs.

Assignment Checking Service

Our free assignment checking service helps you to make sure that your Assignments allow learners to demonstrate appropriate evidence for the required criteria. Please see **here** for further information on how to use this service.

BTEC Centre Guides

If you need any more guidance or information for BTEC internal assessment or internal verification, you can refer to the **Centre Guides**.

Your Questions Answered

Our BTEC Quality Team has shared their most **Frequently asked questions** around BTEC assessment. Go to our Knowledge Base service to ask your question – or talk to an expert in our Teaching Services team via our **Support portal**.