

University Admissions & Vocational Qualifications:

Two Years On



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Action on Access is the national co-ordination team for widening participation in higher education. We support the development, promotion and enhancement of social inclusion for the broadest possible access to higher education by:

- working with institutions and key stakeholders across the higher education sector
- working with partnerships, including Aimhigher
- working to promote inclusion and to integrate disability issues within higher education

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Introduction

Research carried out in 2005 and published in 2006 identified a number of factors related to university admissions that appeared to contribute to an explanation for the uneven distribution of those with vocational qualifications (BTEC Nationals and VCE/Applied A-levels) across subject disciplines and types of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in England. The research generated a lot of interest and was widely disseminated¹.

This follow-on research investigated changes in admissions practice that have taken place in the past two years that relate to the admissions of applicants with vocational qualifications and issues that continue to act as obstacles to the admissions of those with vocational qualifications.

A sample of the fourteen universities and the forty-one courses that were part of the original research participated in this follow-on research. The emphasis in selecting the sample was placed on researching change where there appeared to be the most barriers to the vocationally qualified in the previous research and also where there was the most selection taking place in admissions (i.e. where there were relatively high numbers of applications to places).

The findings are presented here together with recommendations for action at local, institutional and national levels.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Data by type of vocational award and subject and grade be made more widely available so that supply and pathway to higher education (HE) trends can be monitored better.
Although some improvements have taken place in UCAS data at institutional level to help institutions differentiate by qualification type (a recommendation in our previous report), data at national level on different entry routes and qualification types could be improved also (by the Higher Education Statistic Agency (HESA) and UCAS).
- All universities (both those with centralised and non-centralised admissions systems) monitor admissions decision-making against their admissions policies. The analysis, using UCAS statistics, should include investigation of the offers made to BTEC National applicants. This practice may well help to support evidence of fairness if the proposal to require universities to submit admissions procedures for scrutiny by the Office for Fair Admissions (OFFA) is taken forward.
- SPA (Supporting Professionalism in Admissions) supports the sharing across the sector of emerging good practice in the description of attainment requirements for a range of Level 3 qualifications as part of its work on fairness mechanisms in the admissions process.

It is also recommended that feedback is sought by universities from applicants with a range of qualifications on the impact of the information provided in prospectuses and on the web on decision-making on which courses and institutions to apply to.

¹ Connor H, Sinclair E and Banerji N (2006) *Progressing to higher education: vocational qualifications and admissions*, published by Action on Access

Plus, it is recommended that a means of sharing information on those selecting courses and institutions across England that actively welcome BTEC National applicants by making them offers is developed by UCAS.

- UCAS develops a national web-based resource that meets the needs of admissions staff, both at the centre and at course level, and is regularly updated. In developing this it should use the expertise of institutions and organisations that have set up local information systems.
- Those courses that attract applicants with Health and Social Care Applied A-levels consider reducing their grade/tariff point requirements for applicants with only that qualification.
- An analysis is carried out of the distribution of grades achieved for BTEC National qualifications in comparison with those for other qualifications by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Higher Education Policy Institute) HEPI or Edexcel.
- Centrally-based specialist staff are employed within all universities with the expertise to identify the kinds of analyses that would meet the needs of admissions practitioners and with the ability to carry them out. Analysis of statistics available would not necessarily be confined to use for admissions but would have relevance to other concerns in HE including widening participation, diversity, retention, marketing and teaching and learning.

There will also need to be a consistent method of communicating the availability of the statistics and their potential use to end users such as those involved in admissions and course leadership within institutions.

End users will require development so that they can request analyses that will be of use to them in monitoring what is happening in admissions currently and can understand what the statistics mean when they receive them. Training will also be needed in the use of statistics in identifying actions that could be taken to improve the admissions process.

HESA and UCAS (as providers of statistics) and SPA, as well as Action on Access, local Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs), Aimhigher partnerships and regional HE Associations all have a role to play in ensuring that use is made of available statistics in informing HE practice. One university in the sample was already using statistical information in an interesting way as part of its annual course review process. It will be useful to identify and disseminate information on current practice that appears to be having a positive impact.

- The good practice initiated by LLNs and Aimhigher partnerships on dialogue between further education (FE) and HE courses is built on and expanded to include a wider range and quantity of courses in HE (not just those within the subject areas that are the focus of activity within individual local LLNs). This could be facilitated through the further involvement of Aimhigher partnerships and university Widening Participation departments. The dialogue needs to continue beyond the lifetime of the government initiatives that currently support it.



Changing context and shifting policy agenda

A number of contextual changes have taken place in the last few years, which can be seen in the available statistical evidence. There are growing numbers with Level 3 qualifications² in the UK. Some 14.5 million in total held at least this level of qualification in 2007, or 53.6 per cent of economically active adults³. The proportion of 19-year olds in England qualified to Level 3 has grown from 42 per cent of the cohort in 2004 to 48 per cent in 2007⁴. This growth has been mainly due to rising proportions achieving advanced apprenticeships, NVQ Level 3 and, in particular, VRQ⁵ Level 3 qualifications (a group which includes BTEC National awards although these are not shown separately). By contrast, the proportion of 19-year olds achieving either A-level/AS/AVCE or advanced GNVQ has fallen (though numerically have grown because the cohort size has grown).

It is not possible to see trends by individual qualification, such as BTEC National awards, because this is not separately shown in the government statistical publications on educational achievement. Nor are there any statistics published separately by Edexcel or others on BTEC Level 3 qualification achievement each year in aggregate or by subject or grade. This is in contrast to the annually published government data on A-level attainment and grades. No separate AVCE or advanced GNVQ attainment figures are published either. The recent changes in nomenclature of AVCEs with respect to applied A-levels or simply A-levels means even less distinction between them in any official data now produced.

A recent report from HEFCE⁶, however, sheds some light on BTEC numbers and their flows to HE. It shows that numbers taking this qualification have been growing at a fast pace in the last few years (180,000 starters in 2005/06, over twice the 2002/03 total). But the vast majority of these BTEC students are not aiming for higher education - only around a quarter of students who started a BTEC National Diploma in 2002-03 had progressed into HE by the end of the 2004-05 academic year, some two years later. So, this recent growth in BTEC enrolments will have produced a much smaller numerical growth in HE applicants.

As far as we are aware, there is no up-to-date analysis of national trends in BTEC qualified enrolments in higher education. A recent study of vocational routes to HE by Hayward and others used⁷ 2004/05 entry data (one year only) and included BTECs along with NVQs and AVCEs in their definition of vocational qualifications⁸. So far, it has shown very similar results to those reported

² People are at Level 3 if they have achieved at least 2 A-level passes, 4 AS levels, an advanced GNVQ, an Access to HE qualification or an NVQ Level 3 or equivalent vocational qualification

³ DCSF Statistical First Release Vocational Qualifications in the UK: 2006/07, 03/2008

⁴ DCSF (2008) Statistical First Release Level 2 and Level 3 attainment of young people in England measured by using administrative data: attainment by aged 19 in 2007 (provisional), 04/2008

⁵ VRQ =Vocationally Related Qualification

⁶ HEFCE (2007) Pathways to higher education: BTEC courses, 07/35

⁷ By Hayward and others, one of a number of ESRC/TLRP research projects on widening participation in higher education coming to completion, see 'The Transition From VET to HE' paper at SRHE conference, December 2007

in our previous report (based on 2003/04 UCAS data). UCAS no longer publishes national qualification data for applicants but tariff scores instead (though HEIs⁹ can ask for individual qualifications in their own datasets which is a recent improvement). National HESA data on highest qualification at entry still aggregates any combination of GCE A-level and SQA Higher with NVQ/SVQs into one group.

It is recommended that data by type of vocational award, and also subject and grade, be made more widely available so that supply and pathway to HE trends can be monitored better.

Although some improvements have taken place in UCAS data at institutional level to help institutions differentiate by qualification type (a recommendation in our previous report), data at national level on different entry routes and qualification types could be improved also (by HESA and UCAS).

Since the original research was reported in early 2006, there have been a number of policy changes which may have had an impact on the admissions of vocationally qualified students.

- The most significant of these changes has been the establishment of 23 additional **Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs)** across England (there were two in existence when the original research was carried out). The main aims of the LLNs are to improve vocational progression pathways to HE through partnerships working between universities and colleges in local areas or regions¹⁰. Though most LLNs have been in existence for less than two years and their scope and priorities vary, many improvements have already taken place in developing new programmes and progression routes at local level for various groups of vocational and work-based learners and also in careers guidance and advice.
- The **new Diploma qualification** is to be introduced at different levels and in pilot form in five sectors in September 2008 alongside existing qualifications. It is unclear whether BTECs will be part of these or stand separately as distinct qualifications though some variation may exist between different Diplomas. There is a difference of opinion among those involved in Diploma development on the target group for the Diploma. Some view the profile of potential Diploma takers as similar to that of current BTEC students, and so their pattern of progression may be similar also. Others see it being taken up by much wider attainment groups and yet others by narrower attainment groups. There have also been mixed views from HEIs on the new Diploma qualifications and how they will be treated in admissions.

⁸ National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCEs) known also as VCE A-levels, Vocational A-levels or Applied A-levels

⁹ HEIs = Higher Education Institutions ⁹ HEIs = Higher Education Institutions

¹⁰ See Report to HEFCE (January 2008) on the Interim Evaluation of LLNs, by CHERI /OU



- A third strand of policy development has been focused on the importance of encouraging more **older people in work to improve their qualifications**, including more qualified to HE levels (see Leitch Review). This has meant greater engagement by HEIs with employers, including developing more work-based part-time routes to HE.¹¹
- Finally, looking specifically at HE admissions and full time courses, the UCAS Tariff had only recently included BTEC National qualifications when the original research was carried out two years ago. In most cases, because of the need to go to press on prospectuses two years before an admissions round, the change had not been evident in publicity material. In the last two years **vocational qualifications have become more embedded in the tariff system.**

In his speech on widening participation at the April 2008 HEFCE conference¹², John Denham, the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, outlined two more initiatives that may have an impact on vocational admissions. The first of these is an investigation by Universities UK and the Association of Colleges into the progression of young people from general FE colleges to university. The need for this investigation arises from Sutton Trust research findings that reveal that the average application rates to Russell Group universities are significantly lower than for schools and other types of colleges for students of similar attainment. It is hoped that this investigation will include all those applying with Level 3 qualifications. Many of those taking BTEC National qualifications study at general FE colleges.

The second initiative put forward in John Denham's speech was a proposal to expand the role of the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) to include the power to scrutinise the admissions procedures of every university on an annual basis for fairness. If this scrutiny were to include monitoring by entry qualifications it might well have an impact on the admissions to university of those with vocational qualifications.

¹¹ See recent consultation document from DIUS , April 2008, Higher Education at Work: Higher Skills, higher value

¹² www.dius.gov.uk/speeches/denham_HEFCE_080408.html

Findings of follow-on research

This section reports mainly on the findings from interviews with staff in central roles that are relevant to vocational admissions and those carrying out admissions decision-making for particular courses in a sample of the universities that were part of the original research.

Direct impact of original research

The usefulness of the original research has been reported frequently to the researchers by those involved in the development of Lifelong Learning Networks. Several LLNs used the research as a basis for their proposals for funding and in developing their staff and work activities – ‘I give all my new staff a copy of your report to read as part of their induction’ – was a comment from one LLN Director. LLN staff have reported using the research in discussions on admissions in partner universities. At least one university has carried out staff development for admissions tutors around the findings of the report through their LLN. Another LLN has used the report in the development of progression agreements with HE and FE staff.

At individual university and course level, direct impact of the previous research has been harder to gauge since there has been considerable staff turnover. Staff involved in interviews and feedback sessions on university findings for the original research were rarely still in post. Those interviewed for this follow-on research were able to describe changes but not always the reasons for them. It is likely that the original research generated discussion that has contributed to some change in practices in the admission of applicants with vocational qualifications, perhaps interacting with other advances. An example is the changes that some HEIs have made to the way they describe their attainment requirements so that these are clear to applicants with BTEC National qualifications. The need to reduce ambiguity was highlighted in the original research but change was helped enormously by the ‘bedding down’ of the use of the UCAS tariff.



Changes since the original research

- **Numbers of applicants with vocational qualifications**

Those interviewed for the 2006 research reported that applications from those with BTEC National qualifications were about the same, and for some courses rising in comparison with applications in 2005. This perception is very much in line with the increase in those starting BTEC National awards identified in the HEFCE research reported on earlier¹³. The numbers reported applying with VCE/Applied A-levels appeared to be falling except in the Health and Social Care subject area. Several staff involved in admissions decision-making reported not remembering seeing any applications from those with double awards in the 07/08 application year, the first year in which those with Applied A-levels would be applying.

- **Consistency in attainment requirements in practice and advertising**

The original research highlighted inconsistencies in offer grades and qualifications that were considered acceptable between the information provided to applicants through prospectuses and the web and those used by admissions tutors. In some cases there were differences across all of these so that the information provided to applicants on the web differed from that provided by the prospectus which in turn differed from practice. These inconsistencies were evident for both A-level and vocational applicants, though for vocational applicants they were sometimes compounded by the practice of individual tutors who did not always make offers to BTEC National applicants in the way that marketing information described.

Four universities in our follow-on interviews now operate central admissions decision-making for the majority of their courses. In one case this had been partially in place when the original research was carried out. The effect of this has been that the institutions' admissions policy is what is put into effect across the board so that if an institution says it accepts BTEC qualifications those applying with these qualifications with the predicted grades that are required for a course will be given an offer. As one participant commented, 'There is no longer the scope for staff to work in their own way.'

The impact that centralised admissions systems appear to have had on offers made to BTEC applicants puts the spotlight on the opportunities provided by non-centralised admissions processes for individual staff preferences to override university policy.

It is recommended that all universities (both those with centralised and non-centralised admissions systems) monitor admissions decision-making against their admissions policies. The analysis, using UCAS statistics, should include investigation of the offers made to BTEC National applicants. This practice may well help to support evidence of

¹³ See footnote 6

fairness if the proposal to require universities to submit admissions procedures for scrutiny by the Office for Fair Admissions (OFFA) is taken forward.

- **Making entry requirements clear to applicants and their advisors**

Most universities in the original research produced prospectuses and web information that were ambiguous in describing whether BTEC qualifications, in particular, were accepted and what the grade requirements were. These ambiguities were not apparent for A-level applicants. There were also differences between courses within institutions in the way they described what qualifications and grades they required. Again this was compounded by the fact that practice in admissions decision-making did not always reflect what was written in publicity. The effect this had on applicants and their advisors was highlighted by college tutors of BTEC National students who attended dissemination events for the original research. They expressed concern that it was difficult for them to advise their top-achieving students on courses and universities that would welcome their students' applications. London East Thames Gateway (LETG) Aimhigher together with Tower Hamlets College have supported the development of a web based system to share information on welcoming courses. This initiative arose as a result of discussion at a dissemination event for the original research.

Five universities appear to have made vast improvements to the clarity of their requirement descriptions. In four of them, these were attributed in part to the use of UCAS tariff points as a generic descriptor of requirement that allowed a 'qualification neutral' description of grade requirement. The fifth university had changed the way it described its grade requirements using grade descriptions only so that these were available for a range of courses. Three universities thought that changes may have been in part due to feedback from the original research. In all these universities standard phrases were used to describe requirements so that the differences between courses on this dimension were no longer apparent. However, there continue to be courses and institutions where BTEC applicants would have difficulty knowing whether their applications would be welcome. In some cases these same courses express a keenness to make offers to suitable BTEC National applicants but have few such applications.

It is recommended that SPA (Supporting Professionalism in Admissions) supports the sharing across the sector of emerging good practice in the description of attainment requirements for a range of Level 3 qualifications as part of its work on fairness mechanisms in the admissions process.

It is also recommended that feedback is sought by universities from applicants with a range of qualifications on the impact of the information provided in prospectuses and on the web on decision-making on which courses and institutions to apply to.



Finally, it is recommended that a means of sharing information on those selecting courses and institutions across England that actively welcome BTEC National applicants by making them offers is developed by UCAS.

- **Improving knowledge of vocational qualifications**

The original research highlighted a need for more knowledge on the content and assessment of vocational qualifications among admissions staff. Lack of this was thought to have been responsible for admissions tutors 'playing safe' by requiring higher grades (against the UCAS tariff) for those with BTEC Nationals than those with A-levels and for negative attitudes to the knowledge, skills and ability of these applicants.

Several of the universities with centralised admissions systems used the new UCAS-provided UK qualifications guide¹⁴ that has been specifically produced as a working manual for admissions tutors and staff involved in admissions to provide 'up-to-date information about a wide range of pre-HE qualifications and entry routes to HE'. This manual was not available when the original research was carried out. Interestingly though, it was not mentioned by any of the course-related admissions staff interviewed, suggesting possibly that it was not known about or that it was not seen as useful to them.

A few of our course-level interviewees had, however, looked in detail at some vocational qualifications. One course admissions tutor had been involved in the development of a progression agreement that required close examination of course content. This was for a VTCT (not a BTEC National) course. One admissions tutor had started accepting applications from BTEC National students with a particular subject specialism after examination of the curriculum for that course. Four admissions staff interviewed had taken part in staff development around the Diploma. One course had recently amended its requirements to include a particular Diploma being developed jointly with staff in the faculty.

However, participants in the research from several universities commented that there was a continuing need for information to be available to admissions staff on the content and assessment of qualifications both applied and academic - as they change and develop. One university in the study was putting together a web-based qualifications resource. Since the Level 3 qualifications themselves are national this information would best be provided at a national rather than institution or local level to avoid replication of resources.

It is recommended that UCAS develops a national web-based resource that meets the needs of admissions staff, both at the centre and at course level, which is regularly updated. In developing this it should use the expertise of institutions and organisations that have set up local information systems.

¹⁴ Phil Vickers and Bahram Bekhradnia, 'Vocational A-levels and university entry. Is there parity of esteem?' Higher Education Policy Institute (date unknown - downloaded Jan 07).

- **The impact of the use of the UCAS tariff**

The UCAS tariff has provided the basis for a great improvement in the acceptance of the vocational qualifications that were the focus of this study. However, one of the findings of the original research was that those applicants to university who were able to take only the VCE double award because of restrictions at the institutions they attended were at a disadvantage since most HE courses based their requirements on three units (BTEC National Diploma or 3 A-levels). One health-related course at a university that did not use the UCAS tariff had resolved this problem by providing a lower requirement against the tariff for those doing just the VCE/ Applied A-level double award. The issue may be mainly confined to those applicants taking Health and Social Care Applied A-levels since the numbers taking double awards generally appear to be reducing.

It is recommended that those courses that attract applicants with Health and Social Care Applied A-levels consider reducing their grade/tariff point requirements for applicants with only that qualification.

Decisions on tariff point requirements are usually based on the A-level requirements for a course. There was some concern expressed in the report of the original research that this benchmarking of requirements for all other qualifications against A-levels might disadvantage applicants with other qualifications where the distribution of grades differs from that for A-levels. For instance, we know there has been an increase in higher grades awarded for A-levels year on year (and indeed this is the reason given by some selecting courses for raising their tariff point requirement). As a result of reading this discussion in the report of the original research, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) carried out an analysis of the distribution of grades for A-levels and VCEs and of the increase in higher grades for the two types of qualification. They found that fewer top grades were indeed awarded to VCE students than A-level students but that the rate of increase in higher grades for VCEs was greater than for A-levels. The analysis was restricted to VCEs and did not include BTECs.

It is recommended that an analysis is carried out of the distribution of grades achieved for BTEC National qualifications in comparison with those for other qualifications by HEFCE, HEPI or Edexcel.



- **Monitoring admissions and student progress**

Collecting information on the relative progress of applicants with different qualifications through the admissions process was identified in the original report as important if the admissions system is to be reviewed for its relative impact on applicants with different types of qualifications. Similarly the analysis of statistics on the attainment of students with different entry qualifications as they progress through HE courses is important in providing evidence for or against negative attitudes that were expressed in the original research about the ability of those with vocational qualifications to succeed.

Two years ago HESA and UCAS data provided to HEIs was organised in such a way as to make analysis by the qualifications that were the focus of this research impossible. This is no longer the case. Also, since the original research, some HEIs have begun to employ staff in roles that include analysis of these statistics. The dissemination across institutions of statistical information on courses is, however, at an early stage. In our interviews we found some frustration expressed at the lack of information available to those with admissions roles at course level since the statistics were not usually in the central admissions office and it was often difficult to find out where they were located within the university. There was also felt to be a need for the training of admissions tutors in how to analyse and use the statistics in making decisions about changes to be made.

Statistical information plays an important role in professionalising admissions since it makes the process more evidence-based. The information is now available and so the challenge now is to encourage its use in order to monitor and amend practice.

It is recommended that Centrally-based specialist staff are employed within all universities with the expertise to identify the kinds of analyses that would meet the needs of admissions practitioners and with the ability to carry them out. Analysis of statistics available would not necessarily be confined to use for admissions but would have relevance to other concerns in HE including widening participation, diversity, retention, marketing and teaching and learning.

There will also need to be a consistent method of communicating the availability of the statistics and their potential use to end users such as those involved in admissions and course leadership within institutions.

End users will require development so that they can request analyses that will be of use to them in monitoring what is happening in admissions currently and can understand what the statistics mean when they receive them. Training will also be needed in the use of statistics in identifying actions that could be taken to improve the admissions process.

HESA and UCAS (as providers of statistics) and SPA, as well as Action on Access, local Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs), Aimhigher partnerships and regional HE Associations all have a role to play in ensuring that use is made of available statistics in informing HE practice. One university in the sample was already using statistical information in an interesting way as part of its annual course review process. It will be useful to identify and disseminate information on current practice that appears to be having a positive impact.

- **Growing awareness of the value of vocational qualifications**

Admissions staff interviewed for two courses in the follow-on research had changed the way they viewed BTEC National applications. In one case this was as a result of contact with staff in an FE college and a close investigation of the BTEC National curriculum for one subject area. In the other it was a result of a review of admissions that had included describing the attributes of students they wished to attract. Since the original research was carried out several highly selective health-related courses have started advertising that they accept applications from those with BTEC Nationals. These include two veterinary science/medicine courses that have now accepted several BTEC National students onto their foundation programmes and in one case accepted some straight onto the main 5-year programme. Four medical schools accept BTEC National students onto their main 5-year programme. Several more accept them onto their 6-year programme (with a foundation year). There is a continuing need to develop understanding of the value of vocational qualifications and it is likely that this outcome will be enhanced by the dialogue being developed through LLNs and Aimhigher partnerships between FE and HE at course level.

It is recommended that the good practice initiated by LLNs and Aimhigher partnerships on dialogue between further education (FE) and HE courses is built on and expanded to include a wider range and quantity of courses in HE (not just those within the subject areas that are the focus of activity within individual local LLNs). This could be facilitated through the further involvement of Aimhigher partnerships and university Widening Participation departments. The dialogue needs to continue beyond the lifetime of the government initiatives that currently support it.



Conclusion

This follow-on research has highlighted considerable progress in the last two years in the parity of treatment offered to those applying to university with the vocational qualifications that were the subject of this study and those applying with A-levels for some universities and courses. It is possible though, that the changes in practice are attributable in part to involvement in the original research and are not necessarily evident across the sector. Two years is not long enough to bring about radical change in attitudes and practice that are firmly embedded in the British education system and the barriers encountered in the original research continue to exist for some of the courses and universities that were part of the original research.

Examples of continuing barriers include:

- courses that continue to have requirements for specialist subjects from BTEC applicants but do not require specialist A-levels
- courses that continue to have higher tariff point requirements for those applying with BTEC Nationals
- courses that require an A-level in addition to the three units awarded for their Level 3
- courses and universities whose marketing information continues to be ambiguous in describing vocational qualification acceptance (despite the university having a policy of acceptance and some of the courses themselves wishing to attract vocational applicants)
- benchmarking of vocational qualifications against A-levels on the UCAS tariff
- tensions between recognising the most able students doing non-traditional courses and the newspaper league tables which focus on A-level entry

These barriers continue to be greatest, on the whole, for selecting courses and institutions.

The advent of the new Diplomas will result in applications to university by students with a range of new qualifications at Levels 2 and 3. These will not necessarily be widely understood by admissions tutors and, despite the best efforts of those devising and marketing them, are likely to carry some of the same prejudices as current vocational qualifications. It will be important to learn from the findings of this research and to carry its recommendations forward to ensure that the barriers to progress to university encountered by applicants with BTEC National qualifications are not perpetuated for those applying with the new Diplomas.

The BTEC National is unlikely to disappear as a potential entry qualification to HE for some time yet. The first three phases of the new applied Diplomas will be available across the country to all 14–19 year olds by 2013. BTEC National units may well appear in some subjects as part of the offer. Existing qualifications, including BTEC Nationals, are likely to continue to exist in parallel with the Diploma until at least that time and may continue until after that date. It will be important to ensure that universities' admissions practices and the processes before and after them in the student cycle, the marketing and information, advice and guidance offered as well as teaching and learning provided once students are enrolled, are fair to all, irrespective of Level 3 entry qualification.



Notes

Glossary

Action on Access	National co-ordination team for widening participation in higher education, funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England
Aimhigher	National programme to encourage young people to study at higher education level funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and supported by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
Applied A-level	Can be offered as double award and replacing AVCE from 2006 (first awards 2008)
AS	Advanced Subsidiary Level
AVCE	Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education. Replaced Advanced GNVQ in 2000. Can be offered as double award.
BTEC National	Qualification at Level 3 named after the Business & Technician Education Centre – a qualification provider (now Edexcel)
Edexcel	Qualification provider
FE	Further Education
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification – Advanced level of which was offered at Level 3 and succeeded by AVCE
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEPI	Higher Education Policy Institute
HESA	Higher Education Statistic Agency
LLN	Lifelong Learning Network
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
SPA	Supporting Professionalism in Admissions
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SVQ	Scottish Vocational Qualification
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UK)
VCE	Vocational Certificate of Education
VRQ	Vocationally Related Qualifications
VTCT	Vocational qualification provider

Publications

from Action on Access

- Embedding Success: Learning from Disability Projects in Higher Education, June 2008
- Higher Education Progression Framework Guide, June 2008
- University Admissions & Vocational Qualifications: Two Years On, June 2008
- A Summary Guide to 14-19 Reform: Updated 2008, May 2008
- Post-16 Education and Disabled Learners, January 2008.
- Action On Access: Looking to the Future of Widening Participation, December 2007.
- Disability: A Rough Guide for Widening Participation Practitioners, March 2007.
- Policy That Works: Widening Participation to Higher Education. December 2006.
- Progressing to Higher Education: Vocational Qualifications and Admissions, March 2006.
- The Learner Perspective in Educational Transitions, February 2006.
- A Summary Guide to 14 – 19 Reform, October 2005.

- International Comparators of Widening Participation to and through Higher Education: Policy and Practice.
 - Australian Universities, their Students and Social Equity, September 2005.
 - South African Universities, New Developments and the Adult Population, September 2005.
 - Canada: Widening Participation in Rural and Coastal Areas, September 2005.
 - Higher Education in the USA, Student Fees, Financial Aid and Access, November 2005.
 - Sweden, its Universities and Vocational Education, November 2005.

- Working Together: Aimhigher Governance and Management, A Guide for Partnerships, September 2005.
- Aimhigher and the Learning and Skills Council: Approaches to Joint Working, July 2005.
- Making a Difference: The Impact of Aimhigher. A set of 10 case studies, June 2005.
- Widening Participation: A Rough Guide for Higher Education Providers, April 2005.
- Student Success in Higher Education, October 2004.

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