

Teaching, Learning and Assessment within BTEC Higher National Qualifications

The assessment of the BTEC Higher National qualifications is criterion-referenced and centres will be required to assess the learners' evidence against published learning outcomes and assessment criteria. All units will be individually graded as 'pass', 'merit' or 'distinction'. To achieve a pass grade for the unit learners must meet the assessment criteria set out in the specifications. This gives transparency to the assessment process and provides for the establishment of national standards for each qualification.

The units in BTEC Higher National qualifications all have a standard format which is designed to provide clear guidance on the requirements of the qualification for learners, assessors and those responsible for monitoring National standards.

It should be noted that the revised National Qualifications Framework versions of BTEC HNCs and HNDs will be phased in either September 2003 or September 2004 (see accreditation details on the Edexcel website for up-to-date details)

Unit format

Each unit is set out in the following way:

Unit title, learning hours and level

The unit titles of the revised NQF versions of BTEC HNDs and HNCs are accredited by QCA and this form of words will appear on the learner's Notification of Performance. In BTEC Higher National qualifications each unit consists of 60 guided learning hours. The level refers to the level in the NQF.

Description of unit

A brief description of the overall purpose of the unit is given, together with the key areas of study associated with the unit.

Summary of learning outcomes

The outcomes of the unit identify what each learner must do in order to pass the unit. Learners should achieve all the outcomes in order to pass the unit.

Content

This section picks up highlighted words from the outcomes and amplifies the content coverage required when addressing the outcomes. The content section will often have lists of topics; care should be taken to note those that begin with 'eg', where the list is merely indicative, and those that do not, where all aspects of the listed topics should be covered.

Assessment guidance

Each unit contains statements of the evidence that each learner should produce in order to receive a pass.

Essential information for teachers

This section is not prescriptive but provides additional guidance and amplification related to the unit to support teachers/deliverers and assessors. Its subsections are as follows:

- *Delivery strategies* – offers guidance about possible approaches to delivery. This advice is based on the more usual delivery modes and is not intended to rule out alternative approaches.
- *Assessment strategies* – provides advice about the nature and type of evidence that learners are likely to need to produce in order to pass the unit or achieve the higher grades. This section should be read in conjunction with the assessment criteria.
- *Links* – sets out any links with other units within the qualification that could be used to ensure that learners can relate different aspects within the qualification and offer opportunities for integration of learning, delivery and assessment. Links to the Occupational Standards and/or the key skills, these will be highlighted here.
- *Resources* – identifies the specialist resources likely to be needed to allow learners to generate the evidence required by each unit. The centre will be asked to ensure that this requirement is in place when it seeks approval from Edexcel to offer the qualification.

Learning and Assessment in BTEC Higher Nationals

It is recognised that learners present with varying experiences of education and training and/or work and centres are encouraged to take an open approach to the choice of assessment methods in the general guidance from Edexcel and other support material such as Tutor Support Material. In particular Edexcel has always supported a learner-centred approach to learning and the associated assessment so that maximum use is made of learner's environment and experience.

A range of assessment methods are available to centres that include open-book projects or assignments, practical tests, closed or open short answer questions, essays, performance or artefacts. Centres are expected to use assessment methods that are fit-for-purpose in relation to the size and subject content of each qualification and the nature of the learners so that there are maximum opportunities to present evidence that will meet the requirements of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. For part time learners who principally study for the BTEC Higher National Certificates and BTEC short courses Edexcel encourages centres to make maximum use of the learners' current and/or past work and other experience. For the full time learners on the BTEC Higher National Diploma programmes, while full use should be made of any work experience, it is likely that realistic case studies and research into companies and organisations will offer a more appropriate assessment approach

The purpose of assessment is to ensure that effective learning of the content of each unit has taken place. Evidence of this learning is required for each unit. The assessment of the evidence directly relates to the assessment criteria for each unit.

The process of assessment can aid effective learning by seeking and interpreting evidence to decide the stage that learners have reached in their learning, what further learning needs to take place and how best to do this. Therefore the process of assessment can be part of effective planning of teaching and learning by providing opportunities for both the learner and assessor to obtain information about progress towards learning goals. The assessor and learner must be actively engaged in promoting common understanding of assessment criteria (what it is they are trying to achieve) for further learning to take place. Therefore, learners need constructive guidance about how to improve, capitalising on strengths, with clear and constructive comments about weaknesses and how these might be addressed.

Assessment instruments, collectively, should ensure coverage of all assessment criteria within each unit and should provide opportunities for the evidencing of grading descriptors. It is advised that assessment and contextualised grading criteria are clearly indicated on each assessment instrument to provide a focus for learners (for transparency and to aid in ensuring feedback is specific to the criteria) and to assist with internal standardisation processes. Tasks/activities should enable learners to produce evidence that directly relates to the assessment and grading criteria.

Assessment instruments are constructed by centres to meet specific assessment and grading criteria. In designing assessment instruments centres need to ensure that they are valid, reliable and fit for purpose, building on the application of the assessment criteria. You are more likely to meet this requirement if you use a variety of assessment methods, including case studies, assignments, work-based assessment along with projects, performance observation and time-constrained assessments. Centres are encouraged to place emphasis on practical application of the assessment criteria, providing a realistic scenario for learners to adopt and making maximum use of work practical experience. The creation of assessment instruments that are fit for purpose is vital to achievement and their importance cannot be over emphasised.