

## A level or BTEC?

Solihull Sixth Form college offers a range of A level and BTEC courses. All our courses are level 3 qualifications, which means they can only be studied by students who achieve appropriate grades in GCSEs or other Level 2 courses. Typically, A level and Level 3 BTEC courses lead to further study at university, although some students opt to apply for advanced apprenticeships or go directly into employment.

Whether a student chooses A levels or BTEC courses, the standard of learning is the same and you should not think that one qualification is better than another. What is different is the way these courses are taught and assessed. A levels are assessed by examinations sat at the end of two years of study. These are more academic in nature, while BTECs have a much higher coursework content and are continually assessed. If you are the kind of student who has difficulty with exams, considering a BTEC alternative is advised.

BTEC courses are available at three different levels. BTEC Extended Certificates are equivalent to one A level and can be combined with A level subjects to create a 3 or 4 A level/BTEC programme of study. BTEC National Diplomas are also available and these are equal to two A levels, enabling students to choose one National Diploma and one A level course to study together. Finally, BTEC Extended Diplomas are equal to three A levels and students who choose this option pick just the one course to get them a qualification that can take them onto Higher Education or the world of work.

As well as offering a different style of learning and a different assessment than A levels, BTEC courses can sometimes suit a student who is clear on a particular career ambition. For example, if you know you want to continue onto an Art course at university, choosing the BTEC Extended Diploma in Art & Design enables you to progress straight onto an Art degree without the need to study a Foundation courses first (which you would do if you were doing A levels).

Inevitably, choosing A levels enables you to have a broader range of subjects and for some careers this is vital. Students who are considering Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science at university are urged to choose A levels, rather than BTEC courses and the students with these ambitions will need high grades at both GCSE and A level to pursue these courses. Other science-related courses such as Pharmacy, Nursing, Optometry, etc can be pursued with high grades in BTEC courses like Applied Science.

When deciding what are the right courses for you, students are advised to speak to their careers advisers at school and start researching their options. If you know what career/university course you want to do look on university websites to see what grades/courses they require you to have done. If you do not know what you want to do as a career yet, we advise you pick courses you are either already doing well at in school or which you find particularly interesting as you are more likely to achieve good grades on courses you enjoy.

When you apply to the College, we will conduct a short interview with you. Part of this interview will be to ask about your career ambitions so we can properly advise you on your course choices and ensure you understand the grades you will need to achieve at GCSE. All our courses have entry requirements and will require a minimum of two GCSEs at grade 6 or above, and a further 3 GCSEs at grade 4 or above (including in BOTH GCSE English Language AND Mathematics). Some courses require higher grades and you should check our website for more information ([www.solihullsfsc.ac.uk](http://www.solihullsfsc.ac.uk)).