

Written evidence submitted by the Petitions Committee

The Petitions Committee heard from young people to inform a debate on a [petition](#) on the funding of BTEC qualifications, held on 18 June 2022.

Activity

The Petitions Committee asked two colleges to submit videos responding to the Government's plans to withdraw funding from BTEC qualifications. The colleges were:

- Newcastle College, Newcastle
- Saint Francis Xavier College, London

We have summarised the key themes below and illustrated them with quotes from respondents.

Response

We received 15 videos from BTEC students studying at the above colleges.

Key themes:

BTECs were seen as beneficial for students' mental health

- Students said that they preferred the practical nature of BTECs. Some spoke of the stressful nature of exams and classroom-heavy learning as being detrimental to their mental health and not a good way to demonstrate their ability.

Quotes

"My mental health would have suffered. I don't cope well with exams—I am clever enough to do the work—I just need to do it in a way where I can show that I can do it." [Law, Policing and Criminology BTEC student]

"After the trauma of GCSEs—having 20 different exams for 9 subjects—it was a relief to only have one subject to study in a variety of ways." [Extended Diploma in Health and Social Care]

"I don't need to worry about exams or any tests, I'm just in the moment—I design buildings and I build them." [Art, Design and Communication BTEC student]

"I chose to do this course because it's very hands-on and I'm more creative than I am academic [...] when I do exams I'm stressed [...] I am smart, but I'm not god under pressure so this course is good." [Creative Media Production BTEC student]

BTECs were seen as enabling students to specialise

- Students spoke about the option to specialise what they wanted to do within BTECS, as opposed to T Levels which they saw as being more general, and less different to A Levels.

Quotes

“T Level Engineering is just like doing A Levels in Physics or Maths. Apart from work experience, it’s just a slightly more vocational A Level.” [BTEC Aeronautical Engineering BTEC student]

“T levels are more mainstream to run alongside A Levels. The only one related to my interest is media which is really broad and doesn't cater for people with a big interest in photography, graphic design or illustration [...] It’s devastating for future students. If I was born two years later, I wouldn't have been able to pursue my passion.” [Graphic Design BTEC student]

“I wanted to specialise in aviation—no other exam board offered the subject and qualification [without my BTEC] I wouldn't be going into aviation—I would have to try and find an industry that my qualification more directly linked to.” [Aeronautical Engineering BTEC student]

“If I was to do A level computer science, I would have to pick two other subjects that weren’t related to my chosen career path [...] I would like to do something in artificial intelligence or computer science or web developing and I realised that me doing BTEC IT really benefits me as I study a lot of web developing, making apps and learn about computer science as well.” [IT BTEC student]

“I have the grades to do A Levels but I only wanted to do IT, computing specifically. I didn’t want to do any other subjects.” [IT BTEC student]

“Architecture or interior design are the things that I want to do and here you learn architecture, graphics and fashion. So it's more narrowed for the thing I want to do.” [Art, Design and Communication BTEC student]



BTECs were seen as offering the opportunity to learn a wide range of skills

- Students spoke about the value of learning different skills as part of their BTECs.

Quotes

"It helped me learn different mathematical skills [...] I'm able to do graphs on the computer, I learned how to make my own table, [learned about] money—different mathematical skills. I'm not good at maths but I've learned a lot in business within the finance part." [Business BTEC student]

"It taught me how to write essays, because I've never done that before and it also helped me with deadlines and work ethics" [Business BTEC student]

"Multitasking was a big skill I learned due to doing multiple units at the same time. [...] one unit was website designing and the other was coding." [IT BTEC student]

"I enjoy doing my course because it has a structure that isn't compact and encourages creativity [...] The loose structure allows an idea of what to do, but it isn't an instructed direction. There's enough imagination to encourage a whole wide range of results that are unpredictable and can be very beautiful. Creativity is something that I view as very important and should be kept in curriculums." [Nexis Extended Creative Practices BTEC student]

BTECs were seen as more accessible than alternatives, such as T Levels

- Students said that removing funding for BTECs would exclude people from being able to get the qualification they needed to do the job that they wanted. They said that the entry requirements for T Levels would exclude many people. Those who did get onto them but struggled with exams and classroom heavy learning would not do as well.

Quotes

"Many people won't meet the qualifications to get onto [T Levels] and everyone deserves an education no matter what your grades are." [Aviation Operations BTEC student]

"T Levels are 45 days of placement which is difficult to find. There's still lots of exams. It doesn't consider a large population—it's cutting so many people out." [Law, Policing and Criminology BTEC student]

"BTECs teach people more work skills and life skills. [Stopping their funding] removes an opportunity for a group of people to get the job that they want [...] T levels are also only for 18 and under so I wouldn't have been able to do it. [Academic Engineering BTEC student]

BTECs were seen as preparing students for a variety of options on completion of the course

- Students said that they felt that BTECs prepared them for entering the industry straight away with the options of apprenticeships and going to university.

Quotes

"I'll probably go into graphic communication or because of the wide range of skills that I've learned on this course, I could probably go into architecture as well." [Creative Practices BTEC student]

"I might do an apprenticeship when I finish, if not I might just go straight into the industry". [Creative Media Production BTEC student]

BTECs were seen as better preparing students to enter their career paths of choice, and also as an alternative, accessible route into certain career paths

- Students said that BTECs gave them a better understanding of their chosen career paths and industry. Some said that it was an accessible way for them to go on to university or to enter their career of choice when they were unable to do A Levels.

Quotes

"This [BTEC] will help me more because I am wanting to do a career in production and this course really just shows you the full process of what you would be doing—it's much more experience you gain from doing this than actual handwritten exams." [Creative Media BTEC student]

"My maths grades didn't reach the requirements needed for A Levels so this provided me with an alternative pathway to reach the same goal. My goal is to study neuroscience in university. This course provided me with work experience, and I was working with patients in a care home. This really gave me an insight into what I'd be working with in the future." [Applied Science BTEC student]

September 2022