

>

Progression to HE for applicants with Vocational Qualifications

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> HE applications of people with a VET background

- **How the UCAS process works**
- **The tariff and its relationship to qualifications**
- **Indicative entry requirements**
- **Results from the research**
- **Match and mismatch re: vocational qualifications vis-à-vis A levels**
- **Conclusion on the implications of the research**

> Research Objectives

- **Examine indicative entry requirements in respect of voc qualifications published in UCAS course search**
 - Compare with A level entry requirements
- **To examine differences in offers**
- **Examine the subject requirements for entry and determine availability**
- **Examine HE decisions in respect of A levels and vocational qualifications**
- **To examine different practices by institutions**

> The NQF

- **The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) sets out the levels against which a qualification can be recognised in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.**
- **The NQF helps compare the levels of different qualifications and identifies different progression routes.**
- **Assessing the equality of opportunity for learners undertaking vocational qualifications**

> Equivalence?

- **The UCAS Tariff is a points system used to report achievement for entry to higher education (HE) in a numerical format.**
- **It establishes agreed comparability between different types of qualifications and provides comparisons between applicants with different types and volumes of achievement.**
- **HEIs supply data on entry requirements at course level**

> **The two stages of entry to higher education**

Gaining a place at university or college has two stages:

- **The research stage – the key to making the right choices**
- **The application stage**

UCAS supports both stages through an integrated service

> Data sources

- **Applications data for 2006 entry**
- **Course entry requirements from UCAS**
 - For BTEC National Certificates/Diplomas
 - OCR National Diploma / Extended Diploma
 - GCE A Level
 - Advanced VCE / VCE Double award (pre-2005)
- **319 UCAS institutions and 49,995 live running courses**
- **Case study of post-92 and Russell Group HEIs**

> Courses

- **JACS Groups B – Subjects Allied to Medicine, F – Physical Sciences , G – Maths and Computer Sciences, H - Engineering and N – Business Studies**
- **Not all courses had a lot of information**
- **Courses used were:**
 - B700 Nursing
 - F300 Physics
 - G100 Mathematics
 - H200 Civil Engineering
 - H300 Automotive Engineering
 - H600 Electronic and Electrical Engineering
 - N100 Business Studies

> data

- **Applicants were selected on the basis of their qualifications**
- **‘GCE applicants’ = A Level applicants with no Vocational qualifications**
- **‘Voc applicants’ = Vocational applicants with no GCE qualifications**
- **Courses were kept in the dataset where there were both GCE and Voc applicants in the set of applications.**
- **Where a course only had applicants from one of the groups it was eliminated in order to aid comparison.**

> **Match and Mis-match - summary**

- **In general, grade and tariff ranges do match between vocational and academic qualifications**
- **Variations exist between institutions for similar courses but generally in line with higher entry requirements at institutions**
- **Inconsistencies exist in the amount of information available for vocational applicants**
 - Many applicants are instructed to 'contact the institution' (especially for BTEC & particularly for Physics and Civil Engineering Courses)

> Vocational qualifications - conclusions

- Some universities are treating vocational qualifications as "invisible"
- While 93% of institutions had information about A Levels – 81% for Advanced VCE, 83% for Advanced Double VCE, 44% and 55% for BTEC NC and ND respectively, and 21% and 24% for OCR National Diploma and National Extended Diploma respectively
- Evidence that many universities still fail to provide clear guidance to vocational applicants.

> **Focus groups**

- **Motivation of students**
- **Students' knowledge and qualifications**
- **Study skills and approaches to learning**

> Vocational skills - Colleges

- **BTEC students possessed skills such as time management and independent working**
- **Lack of exam techniques due to the coursework-based courses were a worry**
- **Nursing benefited from work skills but HE was seen to value knowledge and not skills**

> Vocational Skills - HEIs

- **Concern about academic rigour and lack of examinations**
- **Engineering – most applicants enter with maths or Physics and vocational students find it hard to keep up**
- **HEIs have different learning styles to vocational courses and it's hard for students to keep up**

> Understanding

- **Colleges felt that HEIs did not understand the BTEC marking system**
- **Asking for higher marks compared to A level students**
- **HEIs commented that they face complications in understanding the curricula for many vocational courses**
- **With regards to Mathematics there was a difficulty due to this element often being buried within the qualification**

> Acceptability

- **Despite BTEC addition to the tariff there was a lack of understanding by all types of institutions about what the qualification could offer and about the level of knowledge that it provides**
- **VA and VDA were more acceptable**
- **The exception was nursing where BTEC was regarded as acceptable and appropriate**

> Entry requirements

- **For all courses and types of institutions A level applicants had detailed information and were not asked to combine qualification with a vocational one**
- **Many courses had no detailed information for vocational applicants and instead they were told to contact the institution**
- **Many subjects requested for a vocational qualification to be in combination with an A level.**
 - Particularly Mathematics, Physics and Business Studies

> Knowledge and HE study

- **There is a concern from HEIs about how prepared vocational students are for HE study**
- **Lack of confidence in the level of Mathematical knowledge possessed**
- **Ability to cope with exams was another cause for concern re: vocational students**
- **Evidence of a "lack of knowledge and understanding" among some admissions officers about vocational qualifications,**

> Conclusion

- **Lack of information about entry requirements**
- **Weaknesses and problems that HEIs anticipate with vocational applicants**