



St George's Academy Sleaford

# BTEC STUDENT HANDBOOK



Student Name:-

## **What are Vocational Qualifications?**

Vocational qualifications are nationally recognised qualifications. They are different from traditional GCSE and A Levels because they are linked to a particular area of work.

## **What makes vocational Qualifications different?**

- Students develop skills, knowledge and understanding in the vocational area they are studying.
- Each vocational course is made up of a number of units, allowing students to build up their qualification in stages.
- Students are assessed through coursework.
- Students produce evidence for their key skills qualification through their vocational course.
- Students take responsibility for their own learning by planning their work, doing research and regularly reviewing their progress.

## **Why do we offer BTEC courses?**

- They prepare students for the world of work and provide a good starting point for other qualifications such as NVQs that can be studied in the workplace.
- Employers value the qualities that vocational students bring to the workplace e.g. organisation, time management, communication and research skills.
- Universities value the independent study skills that vocational students bring to their courses.
- The courses are flexible so that they meet the needs of a wide range of students. They are available at different levels in a variety of formats. They can be taken alongside other qualifications such as traditional GCSEs, A levels.
- They give students the opportunity to try a range of activities such as designing products, organising events, investigating how professionals work and working in teams.

## What will happen in lessons?

This course is made up of units; each unit will take **30 or 60 hours** to complete depending on your course.

You may be taught by more than one teacher, each teacher will be responsible for teaching different units (or parts of a unit), so that means that you may be working on two or even three different units at the same time. You will have to be well organised and remember to keep information in the right places in your folder.

You will be taught the background information by doing class activities and research tasks. Then you will be given an assignment to complete. The assignment will be written or practical with simple tasks first to give you the opportunity to achieve the basic pass level, then the more complex tasks that require more research and independence will allow you to achieve merit and distinction grades. It is important to meet the deadlines so that you can get feedback from your teacher and understand how to reach the higher grades.

The lessons will vary according to the subject and level but all students should experience most of these activities:

- Discussion - one to one or in groups
- Research – group or individual using a variety of methods
- Report writing – manually or using ICT
- Presentations – in groups or individually
- Practical work
- Display work
- Visits to organisations/companies
- Work with visitors
  
- Preparation for external examinations for the newer BTEC courses

## Which styles of teaching will be used?

Different styles of teaching will be required throughout the course. This will depend on the unit being taught, the stage of delivery and the type of assessment required for that unit.

### □ **Teacher input**

At the start of a unit there will be a lot of teacher input; question and answer sessions, discussions, note taking and handouts. This may all happen at the beginning of a unit or at different points throughout the unit. It is important for you to note any information you are given, as it may be required at a later stage in the unit.

### □ **Student investigation**

Once the assignment has been explained and the tasks have been set, you will have to work on your own to find the information you need and then you will have to produce the information in a particular format to meet the requirements of the task. The work you produce must be your own; word for word copying from a textbook, or copying and pasting from the Internet **will not** be accepted nor will you be allowed to copy the work of other students. You will have to check regularly with your teacher to make sure that your work is correct and to discuss any ideas that you want to develop.

### □ **Group work**

For some tasks you may have to work in a group, either to find information or to produce evidence. This is quite acceptable providing that all students take an equal share of the work and that individual contributions are identified.

### □ **Practical Work**

### □ **Learning by experience**

Learning by experience and is usually done in the work place (e.g. work experience or work placement) or by setting up work situations in the classroom (e.g. a role play of a business interview or a health care worker communicating with a client). Whether real or pretend, a lot can be learned from this type of situation and it is important to make the most of it by preparing thoroughly beforehand and recording any information you find. Inviting visitors into school from the vocational sector is another good way of linking your work with what really happens in the workplace.

## **Developing skills**

During your course you will be taught many skills:

- communication skills
- research skills using a variety of methods
- I.C.T. skills using a variety of programs
- practical skills using different techniques and equipment
- presentation skills using a variety of formats
- organisational skills

You will be expected to practise these skills and apply them where appropriate throughout the course.

## **What will be expected of you?**

You will be expected to do all of the following as part of your day-to-day work

- Read and research
- Keep a record of the information you find and the sources
- Plan your work in a logical order and keep a record of your progress
- Talk to your teachers about your ideas and how to achieve the best results
- Produce drafts and final copies of your work
- Produce good quality work with high standards of grammar and spelling
- Present your work in a suitable format according to the purpose and the audience
- Evaluate your work and make suggestions for improvement
- Meet deadlines as outlined in the assessment calendars which your teachers will provide
- Keep a record of the work you have completed, including the grades and points you have been awarded

## **Who will be involved with the course?**

### **Subject teachers (assessors)**

They are responsible for planning lessons, preparing resources, assessing work and making sure that the units are completed on time.

### **Programme manager**

This is the teacher in charge of the course. S/he must make sure that the units are being taught correctly and that sufficient resources are available.

### **Internal Verifier**

S/he will check (IV) the assessment of all teachers on the course; they sample the work of all students on the course and provide written feedback. The IV works with the external verifier.

## **Quality Nominee**

This person oversees all of the vocational courses to make sure that standards are being met. This will be done by:

- Visiting lessons
- Looking at students' work
- Collecting information on student achievement
- Surveying teacher/student views

## **Standards Verifier**

This person has knowledge of the subject and the course and will request to see a sample the work from one unit (see below for more details).

## **Exam Officer**

The examinations officer (Mrs Hartill) is responsible for registering students for the course and for claiming qualifications with the Quality Nominee.

## **How will your work be assessed?**

All students will have to produce a portfolio of evidence. For each unit of work you will be given a series of tasks to complete and an assessment grid that will identify what you have to do to achieve a particular grade. Your teacher will check your work against the grid and make comments about the effort you have made and the quality of your work. Points will be awarded and added to your overall score with every unit that you complete. You will be expected to meet regular deadlines and a referral procedure will operate for students who fail to do this.

If you are studying one of the newer BTEC programmes your teacher will guide you and help to prepare you for an external examination which may be a paper exam or an onscreen exam. This will be taken under formal exam conditions.

## **How to achieve the grades**

The tasks at each level are graded according to how difficult they are to achieve. The key words used in the tasks will help you to understand what you have to do. The command words below will help you understand what is required.



# PASS COMMAND VERBS

## **DESCRIBE**

Give a clear description that includes all the relevant features. Think of it as 'painting a picture with words'.

## **DEFINE**

Clearly explain what a particular term means and give an example, if appropriate, to show what you mean.

## **DESIGN**

Create a plan, proposal or outline to illustrate a straightforward concept or idea.

## **EXPLAIN**

Set out in detail the meaning of something, with reasons. More difficult than describing or listing so it can help to give an example to show what you mean. Start by introducing the topic then give the 'how' or 'why'.

## **IDENTIFY**

Point out (ie choose the right one) or give a list of the main features.

## **ILLUSTRATE**

Include examples or a diagram to show what you mean.

## **INTERPRET**

Define or explain the meaning of something.

## **LIST**

Provide the information in a list, rather than in continuous writing.

## **OUTLINE**

Write a clear description but not a detailed one.

## **PLAN**

Work out and plan how you would carry out a task or activity.

## **STATE**

Write a clear and full account.

## **SUMMARISE**

Write down the main points or essential features.

# MERIT COMMAND VERBS

## **ANALYSE**

Identify separate factors, say how they are related and how each one contributes to the topic.

## **COMPARE / CONTRAST**

Identify the main factors that apply in two or more situations and explain the similarities and differences or advantages and disadvantages.

## **DEMONSTRATE**

Provide several relevant examples or related evidence which clearly support the arguments you are making. This may include showing practical skills.

## **DESIGN**

Create a plan, proposal or outline to illustrate a relatively complex concept or idea.

## **ASSESS**

Give careful consideration to all the factors or events that apply and identify which are the most important or relevant.

## **EXPLAIN IN DETAIL**

Provide details and give reasons and/or evidence to clearly support the argument you are making.

## **HOW / WHY JUSTIFY**

Give reasons or evidence to support your opinion or view to show how you arrived at these conclusions.

## **DISTINCTION COMMAND VERBS**

### **APPRAISE**

Consider the plus and minus points and give a reasoned judgement.

### **ASSESS**

Must make a judgement on the importance of something (similar to evaluate)

### **COMMENT CRITICALLY**

Give your view after you have considered all the evidence. In particular decide the importance of all the relevant positive and negative aspects.

### **CRITICISE**

Review a topic or issue objectively and weigh up both plus and minus points before making a decision.

### **DRAW CONCLUSIONS**

Use the evidence you have provided to reach a reasoned judgement.

### **EVALUATE**

Review the information then bring it together to form a conclusion. Give evidence for each of your views or statements.

### **EVALUATE CRITICALLY**

Decide the degree to which a statement is true or the importance or value of something by reviewing the information. Include precise and detailed information and assess possible alternatives, bearing in mind their strengths and weaknesses if they were applied instead.

## How will standards of work be maintained?

### □ Internal Verification

This is a quality control check to ensure that all students' work is being fairly marked and standards are being maintained. When a unit of work has been assessed and graded it will be passed to another teacher in the department who will check that all of the tasks have been completed to the appropriate standard. It may be necessary at this stage, for you, to amend your work, if it does not meet the standards set by other students, who have been awarded the same grade.

### □ Storage of work

You are responsible for the safe storage of work until it is submitted for assessment and **must** ensure you have a back-up. All completed, graded work will be put into presentation folders and stored in a locked filing cabinet/office until standards verification takes place and the final marks have been submitted.

You may be required to store some of your work electronically on the academy systems or a memory stick. It is your responsibility to look after and secure any electronic work. You might do this by taking electronic copies of your work.

### □ Plagiarism and Malpractice

In order to achieve a BTEC qualification, you must produce your own work. You will not be allowed to:

- Copy word for word from textbooks
- Copy and paste from the Internet
- Copy from other students (past or present)

The examination board has a clear policy on how to deal with students who cheat. If you copy the work of another student you will risk having your work cancelled and may achieve nothing. If you lend your work to others, you will also risk having your work cancelled. If you steal another student's work and copy it, the exam board may cancel all of your courses. Do not cheat, remember your teachers are very good at detecting work that has been copied!

## **How will student progress be monitored?**

### **BTEC Assessment Policy and Academic Appeals Procedure - Student Guidance**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

S George's Academy takes its responsibility for ensuring the quality and reliability of assessment very seriously. It recognises that high quality assessment practices are an important element of the student experience and that the outcomes of assessment influence students' future lives.

Courses are assessed through tutor-marked assignments (as well as external exams in the case of new courses.) You need to be aware of the volume of work that needs to be generated on an on-going basis to complete these assignments and the importance of getting that work handed in for assessment by the given deadline.

You will be closely monitored throughout the course and your subject teachers will keep detailed records of your progress. This information will be used for reports and parents evenings and updates will be sent to form teachers, year co-ordinators to follow up where necessary.

#### **ASSESSMENT ENTITLEMENT**

As a student of St George's Academy you are entitled to:

- Fair and open assessment practices.
- An assignment indicating the criteria against which you will be assessed.
- Regular advice, counselling and guidance through tutors.
- Access to an open and fair appeals procedure
- Assessments being carried out regularly and outcomes reported

#### **ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES**

##### **Handing in Assignments**

- You will be given a deadline for each assignment
- Your teacher will then give you **ONE MORE OPPORTUNITY** to upgrade your work but will not be able to have individual guidance or feedback on how to improve. Your work will then be re-submitted to your teacher within an agreed time.

##### **Failure to meet deadlines**

- If you fail to hand in work by the agreed deadline you will need to provide evidence of special circumstance e.g. a Doctor's Certificate. It will not be acceptable to say to your teacher that you did not have time to complete the assignment.

- A failure on your part will result in you not having the opportunity to upgrade your work for a merit or distinction level.

### **Can you appeal against a grade?**

Once your work has been assessed and a grade recorded, that grade will stand, unless the internal verifier requires that the grade be changed. Students can appeal against a grading decision made by the assessor. Details of the appeals procedure are available from the Examinations Officer, and are also outlined in the next pages.

# **BTEC Candidate Malpractice Procedures**

Teachers are responsible for checking the validity of the learner's internally assessed units. This will avoid candidate malpractice.

## **Examples of Candidate Malpractice:**

- Making a false declaration of authenticity. (Example, when sections of the work have been done by others).
- Misusing assessment material and resources.
- The inclusion of inappropriate, offensive or obscene material in coursework assignments.
- Theft (where a candidate's work is removed or stolen), with the intention to pass the coursework off as one's own.
- The alteration of any results document, including certificates.
- A breach of the instructions or advice of a teacher in relation to the assessment rules and regulations.
- Failing to abide by the conditions of supervision designed to maintain the security of the BTEC assessments.
- Collusion: working collaboratively with other candidates, beyond what is permitted.
- Copying from another candidate, allowing work to be copied.
- The deliberate destruction of another's work.
- Disruptive behaviour during an assessment session (including the use of offensive language).
- Assisting others in the production of coursework.
- Plagiarism: unacknowledged copying from published sources; incomplete referencing.

## **How to deter candidate malpractice**

Teachers should ensure that a large proportion of assigned work is completed with supervision.

The Programme Manager or teacher should cover the following topics with all learners during the induction period:

- Inform learners of the Centre's policy on malpractice and the penalties for attempted and actual incidents of malpractice.
- Show learners the appropriate formats to record cited texts and other materials or information sources including websites.
- Refer to the BTEC Centre Handbook and Student Handbook for policies.

Programme Managers should also introduce procedures for assessing work in a way that reduces or identifies malpractice, e.g. plagiarism, collusion, cheating, etc.

These procedures may include:

- Periods of supervised sessions during which evidence for assignments/tasks/coursework is produced by the learner.
- Altering assessment assignments/tasks/tools on a regular basis.
- The assessor assessing work for a single assignment/task in a single session for the complete cohort of learners.
- Using oral questions with learners to ascertain their understanding of the concepts, application, etc within their work.
- Assessors getting to know their learners' styles and abilities, etc.

Learners have a responsibility to ensure all work they hand in to be marked is their own. Any additional help or support that they have received must be reported to the assessor before the candidate signs the authentication of work statement.

### **Responding to suspected candidate malpractice**

This will be reported to the Programme Manager who will inform the Quality Nominee and the Exams Officer. An investigation of the alleged malpractice will follow. Consequences will vary on the outcome of the investigation but may include the candidate's malpractice being reported to Edexcel. This may result in the candidate being withdrawn from the course and/or being prevented from taking a qualification with this board for one year.



# BTEC Appeals Procedure

All students will be informed about the Appeals Procedure and have access to a copy of the written procedure.

The Appeals Procedure is set in three stages and will be overseen by the Quality Nominee.

The Head of the Centre will be provided with any appeals and their outcome.

There are only 3 grounds on which a learner can appeal:-

- 1. If he/she feels the grading criteria were being met and the teacher failed to recognise this*
- 2. If he/she feels that they have not been supported appropriately during the assessment of the unit by the assessor*
- 3. If the teacher is not willing to accept alternative evidence as meeting the evidence requirement*

## Stage 1

1. The learner communicates the grounds for appeal to the assessor by completing the stage 1 of the Appeals form and providing the evidence for assessment. The learner can obtain the form from the Programme Manager.
2. The assessor makes the Programme Manager and Quality Nominee aware of the grounds for appeal and then re-assesses the work in the normal way against the unit requirements.
3. The assessor will complete the outcome part of the stage 1 form.
4. The assessor communicates the re-assessment to the learner and makes the Programme Manager aware of the outcome.
5. If the learner is still dissatisfied with the outcome of the first stage of appeal then they can progress to stage 2.

**This stage should be undertaken within 3 working days**

## Stage 2

1. The learner communicates the grounds for appeal by completing the second stage of the appeals form and supplying the relevant evidence to the Lead Internal Verifier – unless the initial decision was made by the Lead Internal Verifier, in which case another assessor from the same programme, or a Lead Internal Verifier from another programme undertakes this role.

2. The Lead Internal Verifier, or other verifier, makes the Quality Nominee aware that the appeal has reached the second stage. The Programme Manager internally verifies the work in the normal way against the unit requirements.
3. The Lead Internal Verifier will complete the outcome part of the stage 2 form.
4. The Lead Internal Verifier communicates the outcome of the internal verification to the learner. He/she will also make the assessor and Quality Nominee aware of the outcome.
5. If the learner is still dissatisfied with the outcome of the second stage of appeal then we move to the final stage of appeal.

**This stage should be undertaken within 3 working days**

### **Stage 3**

1. The learner communicates the grounds for appeal by completing the final part of the Appeals form and supplying the relevant evidence to the Quality Nominee.
2. At this stage the Quality Nominee will call a meeting of at least 3 people to re-examine the evidence (at least one of whom should not have been involved with the assessment decision) from the team of BTEC assessors and lead internal verifiers.
3. The work will be re-examined by this team and they will complete the part of the Stage 3 form.
4. The Quality Nominee will then hold a meeting with the Head of Centre and learners concerned to communicate the outcome of the appeal.
5. Learners are allowed to be accompanied by a parent/guardian if requested.
6. Written records of all appeals should be kept by the school including the outcome of the appeal and reasons for the outcome.
7. A copy of the appeals record should be given to the learner.
8. Full details of any appeal must be made available to Edexcel on request.
9. Edexcel should be informed by the school if any outcome of an appeal has implications for the conduct of assessments of the issue of results at the school.

**This stage should be undertaken within 5 working days**

Edexcel will consider an appeal from the Centre only after the Centre's own internal appeals procedure has been exhausted. Edexcel generally expects most appeals from individual learners to be resolved within the centre.

Edexcel will only consider appeals submitted by the Head of Centre/Principal. The following are situations where an appeal can be made:

- *the Centre disagrees with the outcome(s) from Edexcel's external quality assurance activities*
- *the Centre questions an approval (centre or qualification approval) or a qualification decision (e.g. malpractice) made by Edexcel*
- *a learner considers that a decision continues to disadvantage her/him even after the outcome of the Centre's internal appeals procedure*

