

ROUTES INTO HIGHER EDUCATION : A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE TO ADMISSIONS				
LEVEL 3 QUALIFICATION	ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) DIPLOMA	ADVANCED APPRENTICESHIP	BTEC LEVEL 3 EXTENDED DIPLOMA	CITY & GUILDS TECHBAC
OVERVIEW	Aimed at adults who may have few, or no, formal qualifications. Designed to provide both the skills and academic subject knowledge to progress to higher education (HE).	Work-based training (WBT) programme.	Work related qualification. Aims both to support progression to HE or employment.	City & Guilds TechBac is a new vocational option which is taken mainly by 14-19 year olds who want a challenging qualification which prepares them for a career. It combines a hands-on technical qualification, recognised by employers, with practical work experience and critical skills development, such as team work, enterprise and digital literacy. It is brought to life via the TechBac Skills Zone, an innovative online learning hub available on tablets, PCs and mobiles. The TechBac comprises: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Level 3 technical level qualifications designed with employers (five sizes available)</li><li>• Extended Project</li><li>• Work experience</li><li>• Critical workplace skills development with online tools and content</li><li>• Online forum for advice and guidance</li><li>• Annual team challenge</li><li>• Access to an online CV where tutors can award open badges.</li></ul>
LENGTH OF STUDY	Normally 1 year full time (up to 15 hours per week) or 2 years part time.	Between one and three years to complete depending on sector.	2 years full time.	One or two years full-time (depending on Tech Level size)
ENTRY REQUIREMENTS	Although there are no formal entry requirements, in some cases applicants may be required to have GCSE Maths and or English at grade A*–C (soon to graded 1-9). It may be possible for learners to study one of these GCSEs alongside the Access to HE Diploma. Applicants will normally be asked to sit a Maths and English diagnostic test and in the majority of cases, there will also be an interview as part of the application process.	Typically Level 2 qualifications such as 5 GCSEs at A*–C, or an Apprenticeship at Level 2. However this is not the case for all apprenticeship opportunities as this will be defined by the employer requirements and the requirements for the role.	Level 2 qualifications such as 5 GCSEs at A*–C, or a relevant Level 2 BTEC qualification. For some BTECs grade C or above may be required in maths and/or English.	Level 2 qualifications such as 5 GCSEs at A*–C, or a relevant Level 2 Technical qualification. For some TechBacs level 2 maths and/or English may be needed.
WHO OFFERS IT?	Further Education (FE) colleges, some adult education colleges, private colleges and a limited number of community based organisations.	Apprentices learn primarily in the workplace as paid employees, typically with day release at FE Colleges or a private WBL training provider to underpin knowledge.	FE Colleges, 6th form colleges, schools, private training providers.	FE Colleges, schools, sixth form colleges, and private training providers.
HOW IS IT STUDIED?	Flexible courses, enabling students to study full time or part time.	Most of the training is ‘on the job’. The rest can be provided by a local college or by a specialist learning provider.	Normally studied full time although students may, in some cases, have the option of studying part time.	Full time study in college or school, though some learning may take place through work experience and digital learning.
HOW IS IT ASSESSED?	Assessed using a variety of assessment methods including coursework and formal examinations.	Students work towards a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 3, along with the Tech Cert (BTEC or City and Guilds) and Functional Skills. They need to complete all 3 elements to complete the framework. Sector Skills Councils have assessment principles which are still applicable in the new employer led system.	Assessed and graded through assignments. All assessments are quality assured through internal verification and Edexcel carry out external verification activities. From first teaching in 2016, there will be at least 30% external assessment in all of the BTEC Nationals.	Externally set, externally marked tests (contributing towards 40% of the overall grade); and externally set, externally moderated synoptic assignments (contributing towards 60% of the overall grade).
WHAT’S IT WORTH?	Students achieve 60 credits of which 45 are graded at pass, merit or distinction and which come from units based on academic subject content. The remaining 15 credits are ungraded and come from ‘other’ units that are generally study skills. The 15 ungraded credits could include some that are at level 2 but these are generally at level 3.	Advanced Apprenticeships do not currently carry a UCAS tariff although the qualification is seen as a route to HE, particularly on to Foundation Degrees, flexible work-based HE or Higher Apprenticeships. Advanced Apprentices will gain work-based learning qualifications such as NVQ Level 3, Functional Skills and, in most cases, a relevant knowledge based certificate such as a BTEC.	Equivalent to 3 A Levels. Students get a combination of 4 grades - Pass (P), Merit (M),Distinction (D) and Distinction*(D*). Each combination attracts a different UCAS tariff (see below).	The Level 3 Technical Qualifications are all graded Pass, Merit, Distinction and Distinction*. Five sizes are available: Level 3 Advanced Technical Certificate, Level 3 Advanced Technical Diploma (450 GLHs), Level 3 Advanced Technical Diploma (540 GLHs), Level 3 Advanced Technical Extended Diploma (720 GLHs), Level 3 Advanced Technical Extended Diploma (1080 GLHs).
UCAS TARIFF	The qualification does not currently carry a UCAS tariff. It will however be included in the new UCAS tariff from 2017. For the purposes of the tariff, the size of the qualification is treated as equivalent to 3 A levels. UCAS provide a matrix showing the full range of possible grade profiles based on the 45 graded credits and their tariff point equivalent. Please see table below for an example compared with A levels.	Although the Advanced Apprenticeship does not, itself, carry a UCAS tariff, some Advanced Apprenticeship frameworks will include a component part, such as a BTEC Level 3 Diploma, which does carry a UCAS tariff.	The UCAS tariff according to the 3 grades obtained: D*D*D* = 420, D*D*D = 400, DDD* = 380, DDD = 360, DDM = 320, DMM = 280, MMM = 240, MMP = 200, MPP = 160, PPP = 120.	UCAS points for Technicals and Extended Project: maximum available: 490 Technicals: 40 min – 420 max depending on grading and size of qualification. Level 3 Advanced Technical Certificate: D* 140   D 120   M 80   P 40 Level 3 Advanced Technical Foundation Diploma (540): D* 210   D 180   M 120   P 60 Level 3 Advanced Technical Extended Diploma (720): D* 280   D 240   M 160   P 80 Level 3 Advanced Technical Extended Diploma (1080): D* 420   D 360   M 240   P 120 Note that the Level 3 Advanced Technical Diploma (450) should receive UCAS points early 2016 Extended Project Qualification: A* 70, A 60, B 50, C 40, D 30, E 20
WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?	www.accesstohe.ac.uk and www.ocnlf.org.uk	www.apprenticeships.org.uk	https://qualifications.pearson.com	www.techbac.com www.cityandguilds.com/techbac

HOW DO WE MAKE A MEANINGFUL OFFER?

**ADULT/MATURE LEARNERS**  
Applicants to undergraduate courses who are currently working or have gained substantial work related experience and/or have completed learning that has not been formally recognised will need to be able to access information on a HEIs’ position regarding credit recognition and transfer.

Each institution will make individual decisions about how much credit (if any) can be approved onto a course of study based on the prior learning of the applicant. It is important that HEIs publish their APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning) and APCL (Accreditation of Prior Certified Learning) processes clearly to applicants and where possible who the applicants can contact for further information. Information should include:

Does the HEI accredit prior experiential learning and certified learning?

How is it assessed?

How does the applicant proceed with an application?

How much does it cost?

What support, if any, will the applicant receive to complete an application?

**GENERAL POINTS TO NOTE:**  
A number of learners on these qualifications will be looking to progress on to part time provision. Where courses are offered on a part time/flexible basis it would be useful to learners to make it clear how they can get further information.

In the interests of fairness to non-A Level learners it is advisable not to specify required subjects if you do not also do the same for A Level students.

If you welcome enquires from candidates who do not have a level 3 qualification but who have gained sufficient relevant work experience and skills, be clear about this. If you use APL/APEL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) make it clear how learners can get further information.

Some vocational/non A level students may not have had the opportunity to study (or retake) GCSE English and/or Maths, so consider accepting equivalence such as Functional Skills level 2 in English and Maths.

**ACCESS TO HE DIPLOMA**  
All learners can achieve up to 60 credits, with 45 graded and 15 ungraded. Offers should therefore only be made for 60 credits as learners can no longer achieve additional credits. As some ungraded credits can be at level 2 not all applicants will have the opportunity to achieve 60 credits at level 3. Offers should be considered being framed around the 45 graded credits.

There is no overall qualification grade. Statements such as applicants need an overall merit do not fit with the qualification specification or with what learners can actually achieve.

Learners are registered on 60 credits against the units that they will study, within 12 weeks of the start date of the course. Applicants will be able to list all the units they are undertaking on their UCAS application. Offers therefore need to be framed around what applicants can achieve. (i.e. asking for 21 credits in Chemistry when the applicant is only studying 18, makes the offer unachievable.)

Open College Network (OCN) have indicated that it will more than likely be very difficult for a student to achieve a very high number of distinctions. This is due to the developmental nature of the course. Access learners are usually on a steep learning curve from the start of their course because they are either undertaking academic studies for the first time or returning to learning after a prolonged absence of time. It is therefore unlikely that many students will achieve distinctions in their early assignments.

For entry onto a course in some specific subject areas, e.g. Science, you might want to specify if there are some subjects you will not accept, or if there are preferred subjects. Some vocational/ non A Level students may not have had the opportunity to study GCSE English and Maths, so consider accepting equivalence. This is particularly important for the Access course as, although numeracy and literacy are covered in the L2 units, they are not graded, so asking for equivalent grading can be problematic. HEIs could consider whether they can accept an Access course as offering an equivalence to their normal GCSE Maths and English entry criteria.

**PREDICTED GRADES**  
Because the qualification is designed as a one year course, it is extremely difficult for tutors providing references in time for the UCAS application deadline to give any meaningful predicted grades. Tutors have always been willing to provide an updated reference and by February provide approximate projections of potential progress rather than specific predicted grades for individual units.

The inclusion of the Access to HE qualification within the UCAS tariff is welcome as a guide to offer making. However, it should not deter good practice in admissions and offer making to mature learners. Using interviews, taking into consideration the applicant’s life experience and the ‘added value’ that mature learners bring to their HE study should continue to be used in addition to the tariff.

Access to HE Diplomas (example compared with A levels)		
A level Grades	New UCAS Tariff Points 2017	Nearest Equivalent for Access to HE Diploma
ABB	128	30 Distinctions, 15 Merits (128 points)
BBB	120	24 Distinctions, 18 merits, 3 Passes (118 points)
BBC	112	18 Distinctions, 24 Merits, 3 Passes (112 points)

**ADVANCED APPRENTICESHIP**  
Advanced Apprenticeships do not carry a UCAS tariff\* but you could consider what work-based or part time courses you have that could be appropriate for Advanced Apprentices. They will be learning in the workplace primarily, so the most likely courses that they would want to progress onto will be part time, distance or blended learning, and it is most likely that they will be interested in vocationally related courses. For example, a learner that passes an Advanced Apprenticeship in Engineering may be an appropriate candidate for progression onto a Foundation Degree in Engineering Technology.

If your institution identifies appropriate courses for progression then this can be expressed in the standard UCAS terminology, eg ‘Acceptable on its own.’ Your university may also run shorter ‘bite-sized’ courses that may be of interest to Advanced Apprentices.

Please note that asking for A Levels as additional qualifications will effectively debar the majority of Advanced Apprentices as it is unlikely that they will have previously studied A Levels.

*\* Although the Advanced Apprenticeship does not, itself, carry a UCAS tariff, some Advanced Apprenticeship frameworks will include a component part, such as a BTEC Level 3 Diploma or a BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma, which does carry a UCAS tariff. In your admissions information, you could consider highlighting this. For example by stating that you welcome applications from Advanced Apprenticeships and that, if they have done a BTEC qualification as part of their Advanced Apprenticeship they may have enough UCAS points to meet the minimum requirements. It should be noted, however, that not all Advanced Apprenticeship frameworks contain BTEC qualifications, and some will include equivalent qualifications such as City & Guilds, so you could invite those learners with non UCAS tariff-bearing qualifications to contact your admissions department to discuss the specific content of their qualification.*

New titling for BTEC qualifications

Equivalence in size	Guided learning hours	Current title (QCF)	New title (RQF)
0.5 A levels	180	BTEC Level 3 Certificate (graded P, M, D, D*)	BTEC Level 3 National Certificate (graded P, M, D, D*)
1 A level	360	BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma (graded P, M, D, D*)	BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate (graded P, M, D, D*)
1.5 A levels	510/540	BTEC Level 3 90-Credit Diploma (graded PP to D*D*)	BTEC Level 3 National Foundation Diploma (graded P, M, D, D*)
2 A levels	720	BTEC Level 3 Diploma (graded PP to D*D*)	BTEC Level 3 National Diploma (graded PP to D*D*)
3 A levels	1080	BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma (graded PPP to D*D*D*)	BTEC Level 3 National Extended Diploma (graded PPP to D*D*D*)

UCAS TARIFF POINTS FOR 2017 ONWARDS

BTEC Extended Diploma		
Grade	Current Tariff Points	New Tariff Points
D*D*D*	420	168
D*D*D	400	160
D*DD	380	152
DDD	360	144
DDM	320	128
DMM	280	112
MMM	240	96
MMP	200	80
MPP	160	64
PPP	120	48

City & Guilds TechBac (Provisional)											
Technicals			D* Current		New		D Current		New		
Certificate (360 Guided Learning hours – GLHs)			140	56	120	48	80	32	40	16	
Diploma (450 GLHs)			TBC–Applied For								
Diploma (540 GLHs)			210	84	180	72	120	48	60	24	
Extended Diploma (720 GLHs)			280	112	240	96	160	64	80	32	
Extended Diploma (1080 GLHs)			420	168	360	144	240	96	120	48	
Extended Project Qualification			A* Current		New		A Current		New		
			70	28	60	24	50	20	40	16	
			D Current		New		E Current		New		
			30	12	20	8					

For full details, please see [www.ucas.com/sites/default/files/new-tariff-tables.pdf](http://www.ucas.com/sites/default/files/new-tariff-tables.pdf)

**CITY & GUILDS TECHBAC**  
Techbac learners have followed a programme which includes, but is not restricted to, a substantial technical qualification and the Extended Project. They will also have study, research and teamwork skills, and significant workplace experience through placements and mentoring. They will have been assessed through external examination as well as problem-focussed synoptic assignments. In some cases they may taken a Level 3 maths qualification alongside TechBbac, such as Core Maths or A/AS level.

TechBac qualifications, including the extended project, are UCAS tariffed. Entry requirements can be made in terms of a UCAS tariff or specific aspects (e.g. specific grades in the Extended Project Qualification, which is a good indicator of potential to succeed in HE).

In the interests of clarity for the applicant, if specific TechBac subject(s) are required for entry onto a particular HE course these should be specified in your entry requirements.

**UNCONDITIONAL OFFERS**  
Rather than making unconditional offers to students currently following programmes of study, it would be in the best interest of applicants for HEIs to require them to complete and pass the qualifications. HEIs should encourage students to achieve their best on their level 3 courses. The reasons for this are as follows:

It would improve their motivation and prepare them better for HE study

Learners who have received a 24+ Advanced Learning Loan to study their qualification would not be eligible for the loan waiver on completion of their HE course if they withdraw from their level 3 course without completing.

Level 3 qualification grades are not only important for HE places but other opportunities, e.g. internships, sponsorships while at university.

Graduate employers often specify grades or tariff scores for level 3 qualifications taken when recruiting.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**  
HE providers considering making unconditional offers may find the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) guide “Considerations on unconditional offer-making” useful. To download the guide visit:  
[www.spa.ac.uk/documents/NETT/NETT\\_Unconditional\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.spa.ac.uk/documents/NETT/NETT_Unconditional_Guide.pdf)

# Routes into Higher Education:

## A Good Practice Guide to Admissions for Access to Higher Education Diplomas, Advanced Apprenticeships, City & Guilds TechBac and BTEC Level 3 Extended Diplomas

Linking London was established in 2006 and is based at Birkbeck, University of London. We are a partnership made up of London higher education institutions, colleges and other members (City and Guilds, London Councils Young People's Education and Skills Team, OCN London, Pearson and unionlearn). Partners work both collaboratively and individually to maximise their contribution to targeted student engagement and achievement, social mobility and in the pursuit of improvements of social justice through education.

To help make information about higher education (HE) more accessible the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funded by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) has created the National Networks of Collaborative Outreach (NNCO). Linking London has established a London College Network (NCO) in order to support learners so they can make informed choices and successfully transition into and through HE. The network will work primarily by supporting college advisers so they in turn can support their learners.

Prepared by Andrew Jones, Deputy Director & IAG Specialist, with input from staff at our partner organisations: City & Guilds, OCN London and Pearson. November 2015.

If you would like to find out more about the work of Linking London and its NCO please contact: [info@linkinglondon.ac.uk](mailto:info@linkinglondon.ac.uk) or visit our website: [www.linkinglondon.ac.uk](http://www.linkinglondon.ac.uk)

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