

BTEC EXTENDED CERTIFICATE IN APPLIED SCIENCE FAQs

Q: Why should I do the BTEC Applied Science course instead of A level Science?

There are several answers to that question! The most obvious answer is if you don't get the grades to do an A level and you want to carry on with science past GCSE – BTEC is the best pathway. Students who don't do well at GCSE in maths and science will generally struggle with A level sciences. You have a much better chance of getting a great grade with a BTEC.

Another reason is that BTECs include coursework, not just exams at the end of 2 years. None of the A levels sciences have coursework, but for applied science, about half the marks for your overall grade come from coursework that you have completed. Applied science includes formal exams and externally set practical and research tasks that you do under supervised conditions. If you would rather work steadily towards your grade over two years than just rely on exams at the end of the course, then a BTEC is right for you.

Q: What's the difference between the Extended Diploma and Extended Certificate?

The Extended Diploma is equivalent in size to 3 A levels. This means that you would only study this course and not do any other subjects alongside.

The Extended Certificate is equivalent to one A level. You can do this course alongside two other A levels or alongside 1 A level and another BTEC course. We do not allow people to do 3 BTEC courses in different subjects.

Q: Which course should I pick?

The Extended Diploma course is the course we recommend if you want to go and study something science or healthcare related at University. Most science related degrees and healthcare related degrees require the study of more than one science at A level and so a BTEC equivalent to 1 A level isn't enough.

The Extended Certificate course is what we recommend to students who just need a science subject to support their other courses. For example, some geography courses that have a more environmental focus may want you to offer a science too.

Q: Can I do either of the applied science courses alongside a science A level?

You cannot take the applied science courses alongside A level sciences as there is too much overlap in the material covered. Universities don't accept this combination of subjects.

Q: How much maths is in the course?

All sciences at level 3 have a reasonable amount of maths in, including applied science. You need at least a grade 4 in maths to be able to do the applied science course. You need to be comfortable using percentages, basic algebra like rearranging equations, and working in standard form. You must have a scientific calculator, like the one that you used for GCSE maths and science.

Q: How do the grades on BTEC courses compare to A level courses?

BTECs are graded at distinction*, distinction, merit or pass. This is equivalent to A level grades of A*, A, C or E. In terms of applying to University, they are worth the same amount as the equivalent A level grade.

Q: Do I get separate science grades for the Extended Diploma?

No, you don't. You get an average over the three subjects. This is a bit like the double science award that you did at GCSE, you get 2 grades that average out your performance over all three sciences. You will be awarded a grade between D*D*D* and PPP. The grades can be a mixture (e.g. DDM) in the same way as GCSE.

Q: Why do I have to study all 3 sciences? Is there any way round this?

All the compulsory units for both courses involve all 3 sciences and so we don't get a choice. For the 1 A level equivalent course, the optional unit we offer is biology based, as most students on this course are interested in some science to back up their other courses in sport/psychology/geography etc.

We do have more options on the extended diploma course, but we have chosen to put in equal amounts of the 3 sciences to keep your options open after college as many students change their mind about their career direction.

Q: Where do students go after studying Applied Science?

Most of our students go onto university. From the extended diploma course students go onto healthcare related degrees, such as biomedical science, pharmacy, nursing, radiography or more traditional science degree courses such as biomedical science, forensics and marine biology. We have even had students take a change of direction and do courses like business. From the extended certificate, students who want to do science at university often end up on a science foundation course initially, to increase their science knowledge. But generally, the students study a wide range of courses from geography to sport to marketing, depending on their other courses.

