

art and design

BTEC National Extended Certificate or
National Diploma

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What is this subject about?

The Art & Design BTEC National Diploma and National Extended Certificate are nationally recognised, dynamic and varied courses for committed students who wish to progress to higher education or a potential career path in art and design. The BTEC National Diploma is equivalent to 2 A Levels and the BTEC National Extended Certificate is equivalent to 1 A Level. You will learn how to create art and design using a wide range of materials and techniques ranging from painting and drawing, printmaking and 3D workshop to Adobe Creative applications. In addition, you will build skills in creative problem solving and professional practice. Diploma students will have the opportunity to complete a period of work experience as part of the course in the first year. These courses will develop your understanding of art and design in the wider world, through realistic assignments which explore a variety of art and design disciplines and experimental approaches. In year 2 you will be able to focus on a specialist pathway and build a portfolio for progression applications. Both courses are over two years. The department has an excellent record of enabling students to progress on to many highly respected degree and diploma courses across the country, including: architecture, jewellery design, fashion, graphics, illustration, 3D Design, fine art and game design, in addition to art foundation courses. Students have also progressed to apprenticeships and work placements in web design and 3D crafts.

What will I study?

Units studied on the course include:

- Visual Recording and Communication (BTEC National Diploma and Extended Certificate)
- Critical and Contextual Studies (BTEC National Diploma and Extended Certificate)
- The Creative Process (BTEC National Diploma and Extended Certificate)
- Materials, Techniques and Processes in Art and Design (BTEC National Diploma)
- Developing an Art & Design Portfolio (BTEC National Diploma)

Other units studied on both the BTEC National Diploma and Extended Certificate may include:

- Managing a client brief
- Developing and realising creative intentions
- Graphics Materials, Techniques and Processes
- 3D Materials, Techniques and Processes
- Fine Art Materials, Techniques and Processes

How is the course assessed?

The BTEC National Diploma is assessed through three externally assessed units and five course work based units. The BTEC National Extended Certificate is assessed through two externally assessed units and two course work based units. Units are graded as Pass, Merit, Distinction and Distinction*.

What can the course lead to in terms of higher education and future careers?

The Art & Design department has an excellent track-record for student progression to a wide range of degree and foundation courses across the country. The BTEC courses provide opportunities across most creative disciplines and equip students with the self-reliance and vocational experience necessary to progress directly to BA qualifications. The diploma course includes a focus on professional practice, presentation and communication skills, which prepares students for applications to higher education study.

What can the course lead to in terms of higher education and future careers?

Recent destinations have included degree courses at: Central St Martins (Animation), Falmouth College (Graphic Design), Winchester College (Textile Design), Hertfordshire University (Game Design), Kingston University (Architecture) and Brighton University (Illustration). Many students also progress to art and design foundation courses at Kingston University, UAL and UCL. The range of transferable and vocational skills developed on this programme enables those who do not wish to enter higher education to apply successfully for apprenticeships in professions such as joinery, graphic design and stonemasonry.

Students receive extensive guidance on progression, and Diploma students are able to adapt their second-year programme towards the development of a portfolio relevant to their career aims in creative subjects.

What are the formal entry requirements for this course?

Aside from the general entry requirements the college requires, this course requires significant personal commitment to art and design, and therefore it is expected that applicants will have gained good GCSE grades in creative subjects, or can provide extensive evidence of their own work in a portfolio. You will be set regular written work, including annotation and essays, and should therefore have a good level of written competence, including a grade 4 in GCSE English Language.

What extra support/enrichment activities are on offer?

The department works closely with College Learning Support department to ensure that all students are able to gain the maximum benefit from the course.

You will also explore professional practice through live briefs for external clients (past clients include BP, the V&A Museum and Sky TV), and learn about how specialists in your chosen field work. There are regular visits to museums, galleries, artists and designers to broaden your horizons and inspire your creative project work.

You will be supported by the department through all stages of your application to your next course, including portfolio guidance and mock interviews.

Subject combination advice:

The Diploma provides a self-contained art and design programme enabling successful students to apply direct to degrees and art and design foundation courses. The remaining subject choice can therefore be made from any other subject area, providing entry requirements are met. Consideration should be given to the quantity of coursework overall, and to how mutually supportive subject choices can be.

The Extended Certificate provides a varied art and design programme. Students wishing to apply direct to degrees and art and design foundation courses should consider taking at least one more creative subject to build a coherent portfolio for application.