

IT

Getting Ready for BTECs

BTEC IT is a vocational qualification, so the emphasis is on being able to do something following a recognised process to perform that task. As a result, much of the course will require you to think about processes and practice these with the various pieces of software. In this Transition Guide you'll find some information about the structure of the course and equipment you may want to get hold of.

Course Structure.

This BTEC course involves you studying 4 modules. 2 of them are coursework based and will be marked by your teacher. One of the others is a traditional exam and the final one is 10 hour controlled assessment. The exact order you will study these modules will be determined by your teacher and you will be informed of your pathway in your first lesson.

The units, a brief description of what you will be expected to do and their relative weighting is provided below.

The coursework units follow a similar structure.

Learning Aim A: Investigate the topic.

Learning Aim B: Design a product.

Learning Aim C: Develop a product.

Name: Databases	January Exam	Weighting: 1/4 of the course
This is a controlled assessment where you will be expected to create a database from a brief provided by the exam board. You will also need to create forms, reports and queries. The work is assessed by the exam board. The assessment will take place in January of Year 12.		
Name: Social Media	Coursework	Weighting: 1/4 of the course
You will be expected to investigate how businesses use social media to promote themselves and their products. You will then be expected to produce a plan for a social media campaign and to run the campaign for a number of months while making comment about the success or otherwise of various posts you make.		
Name: Information Systems	January Exam	Weighting: 1/3 of the course
This is a traditional exam covering a wide range of IT based information ranging from technical knowledge of computer hardware and how it works, to installations, the law and ethical considerations.		
Name: Websites	Coursework	Weighting: 1/6 of the course
A piece of coursework where you will be expected to investigate the normal working of a range of websites and the conventions used in their design. You then need to design and produce a website to meet the brief.		

Each year you'll do one exam in January and then spend the rest of the year doing a piece of coursework. All the coursework counts towards your final grade and there's very little slack in the timetable. You need to meet deadlines and act effectively and quickly on feedback. Failing to keep up will have a significant impact on your overall grade.

Equipment

Hardware

While not essential, some pupils choose to use their own laptops for this course. You are also welcome to use your computer for producing the written assignments if you wish.

There is no expectation that you will supply your own laptop, we will provide exercise books and/or paper if you prefer to work this way. All the computers in the school have access to web development software as well as the basic productivity software for producing reports.

The practical exam on Databases is carried out on one of the school's computers, which use Microsoft Windows. Therefore, in order to give you a familiar interface we would recommend that you have a Windows computer.

Software

Report Writing Software

There are lots of free word processors available for you to use. Spend some time investigating the tool that you like most and getting to know how it works. You are required to produce coursework reports in an electronic and professional manner.

If you have a Windows computer, you can install Microsoft Office under the school's licence. You will need to logon to RM Unify – rmunify.com – using your school email and the same password you use to logon to the computers at school (pupils joining the school in Year 12 will need to wait until after 1st September for this to be activated). Once you've installed Office it will ask you to configure the licence – again, logon with your school email address and password.

Reports can just as effectively be written in school on the computers available in lessons and in Private Study which all have the relevant titles installed.

Database Software

One of your exams will be carried out on a computer and will expect you to be able to use Microsoft Access. This is available through the school's Office licence for you to download and install on your own computer.

Web Development Software

Any software that gives you creative control over web site design is a good choice. Do not aim to use one of the many web-based platforms that only really use templates and allow you to tweak the edges. A good choice is Rocket Cake.

Knowledge

There are no entry requirements for this course, but if you're interested in IT then it would be a good idea to have a general idea of where IT is installed and used. Look around you and strive to identify the computers around you and what they do. What other equipment are they connected to, where do they get their information from, what do they do with it and where do they send it?

It's a very good idea to use the software tools to get familiar with how they work. Look into some Social Networking sites and consider the tools that they offer to help you determine the level of engagement your posts have with your followers. Can you find examples of campaigns that have been successful or that have been a failure or an embarrassment to the authors.

Above all

BE CURIOUS

If you're serious about taking your IT studies to A' Level you need to be actively curious about it. Just turning up to lessons might get you a mediocre grade, being interested and exploring beyond the curriculum will be the difference that gets you a top grade. Being willing to put in significant numbers of extra hours outside of the lessons will be the key differentiator.

We want you to challenge us in lessons. Ask us to justify the statements we're making and push us until you understand.

Reading

Here are some books that you might find interesting...

1984 – George Orwell

Ready Player One – Ernest Cline