

Understanding the RQF Level 3 BTEC Nationals outcomes this academic year

As outlined by Ofqual ([Grading exams and assessments in summer 2023 and autumn 2022](#)) the aim this academic year has been to return to normal, pre-pandemic standards. Our aim has been to return to pre-pandemic standards, and we have checks and balances in place to allow us to be sensitive to the disruption learners have faced (just as for A levels and GCSEs).

In the lead up to results, here are some key reminders about the main features and changes in the RQF Level 3 BTEC Nationals. These are considered during standards setting and are also a useful context as results are received.

Please also refer to the [Ofqual's post on Vocational and Technical qualifications grading for 2023](#). It explains that the move to the reformed qualifications means that even though the approach to grading in 2023 may be similar to 2019, the pattern of grades achieved may look different from 2019 and that this will be taken into account by universities and employers. *'As for all qualifications, the return to formal assessments means that outcomes are expected to be lower than outcomes in 2022. Universities and employers are aware of this and have taken this into consideration when making offers to students.'*

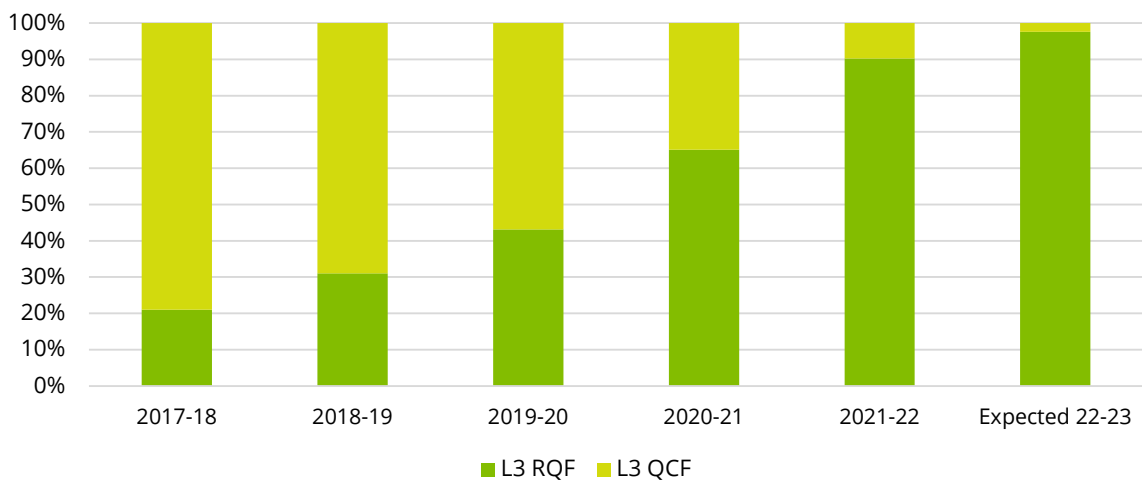


1. Changes in learner make-up

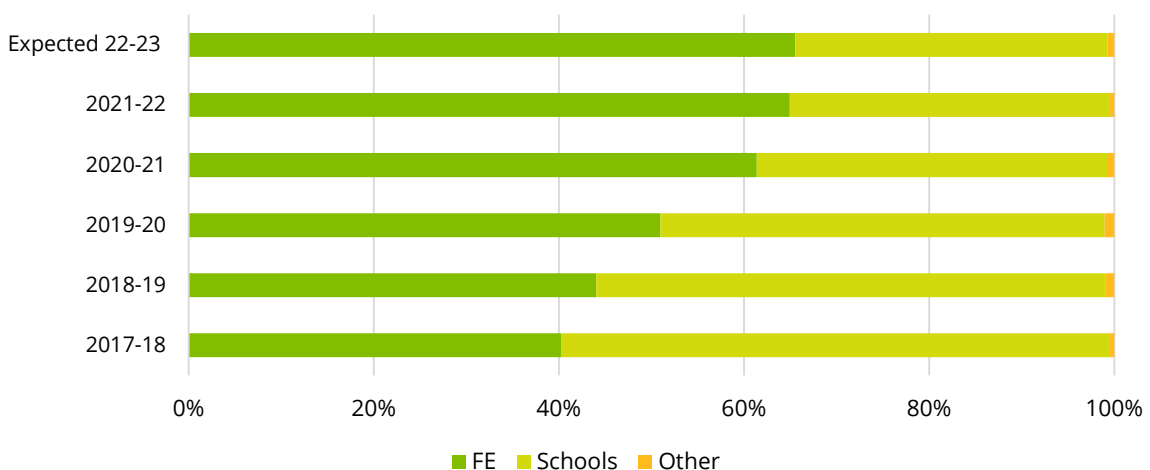
The number of learners and types of schools, colleges and providers offering these qualifications has changed significantly over the last few years with the transition from the legacy QCF Level 3 BTEC Nationals suite to the RQF Level 3 BTEC Nationals suite. This means that direct comparisons with results distributions with previous years will not be comparable due to both the context in which grading took place over the last few years (pandemic and transition towards normal) **and** the changes in cohort make-up.

The majority of the RQF Level 3 BTEC Nationals suite have exams included and were intended to be more challenging qualifications comparatively. Due to the different assessment methodology, we have historically seen lower average grades for the RQF Level 3 BTEC Nationals suite compared to the legacy QCF Level 3 BTEC Nationals suite.

Percentage of completing learners on L3 RQF and L3 QCF



The change in centre types taking L3 RQF over time



2. The qualification grade and units

The points from individual units are added together to give the overall qualification grade.

A learner has achieved a qualification if:

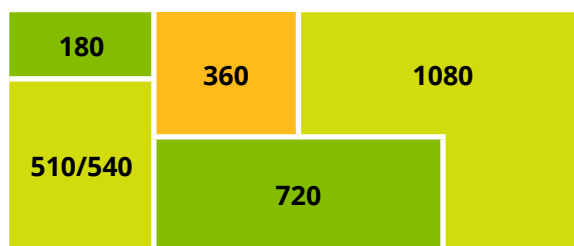
- they have sat a valid combination of units for their qualification (including achieving a minimum of a near pass for all of the external assessments in the qualification);
- they have achieved the appropriate number of points to be awarded a Pass or above;
- a claim for the qualification has been made.

RQF Level 3 BTEC Nationals are modular qualifications, giving learners the flexibility to complete their units and certificate at a pace that is right for them. This means that for many learners their qualification grade this year will be from units that they have taken this academic year **and** last academic year when the approach to unit level standards was taking into account the impact of Covid-19 on teaching and learning.

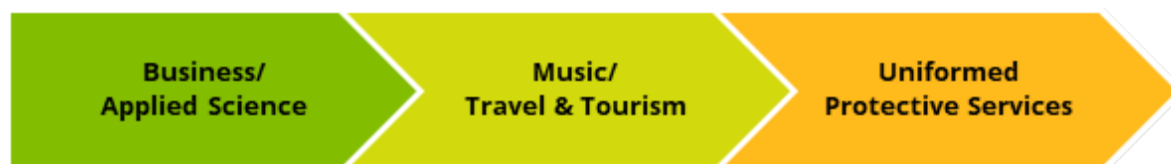
Further details on how we will set grade boundaries for external assessments in summer 2023 can be found in our centre support guide [here](#).

3. Different sizes and new qualifications

The RQF Level 3 BTEC Nationals suite has different qualification sizes which can be delivered over one, two or more years. Just as with the change in learner make-up, the patterns of learners taking different sizes has changed significantly over the last few years.



The transition from the legacy QCF Level 3 BTEC Nationals suite to the RQF Level 3 BTEC Nationals suite has happened at different points for different qualifications. Some started the transition when the RQF Level 3 BTEC Nationals were first introduced in 2016, whilst for other qualifications it has been much later, and first certifications took place during or after the pandemic.



Different qualifications (and sizes) have been introduced at different points over the years

As RQF Level 3 BTEC National results are received over the next few weeks it is important to remember these key factors that have varied over the last few years. For external assessments where we set grade boundaries each year, subject matter and technical experts will use a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence (just as in A levels and GCSEs) to support where final recommendations are made. As is always the case when awarding, any differences observed in overall performance will be taken into account.