

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF THE BTEC AWARDS!

BTEC Awards 2021



BTEC AWARDS



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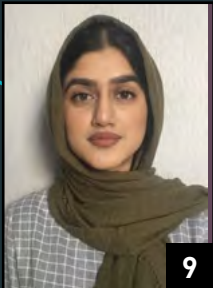
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'A decade of awarding excellence in vocational education'

FRASER WHIELDON
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This year marks ten years of the BTEC Awards. That's ten years of celebrating individuals exceeding in vocational pursuits. Ten years of glamorous award ceremonies, even though 2020's took place virtually. And ten years of the BTEC Awards promoting the sector with a highly competitive contest, not just between excellent learners, but excellent educators and providers too.

The awards come after over 30 years of Pearson running the BTEC qualifications, which are vocational qualifications aimed at making learners "career-ready" by

emphasising a hands-on approach and developing the knowledge and practical skills which employers want. Students get to work on a series of assignments in real-life scenarios throughout the course.

As Pearson's UK president Rod Bristow said at last year's awards: "What employers value isn't just what you know; it's also what you can do.

"That is why BTEC courses are tough and it's why employers and universities love BTEC. It's also why BTEC is the world's career-focused learning pathway". It's also why they received 460 nominations from 21 countries last year.

On page four, we go further into what makes BTECs so important by speaking to senior vice president for BTEC and apprenticeships Cindy

Rampersaud.

Then, between pages six and ten, we meet some of the past winners of the awards, to get a first-hand account of what it's like to win, and also find out where their BTEC and their award has taken them, including university and employment. We even speak to one of the original winners from 2011!

Then on page 12 comes the part you are all waiting for: the list of award categories and how you can enter. Nominations close on April 2 next year, so there's plenty of time to get your nominations in. The awards themselves will take place on June 24, and it's sure to be a day to remember.

FE Week is proud to support the BTEC Awards.



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'A showcase for brilliant students, providers, and learners'

Why the BTEC Awards are so important for the sector

FRASER WHIELDON
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So what makes the BTEC Awards one of the most competitive and important landmarks in the skills sector's calendar? FE Week spoke with Pearson's senior vice president for BTEC and apprenticeships Cindy Rampersaud to find out the answer, and also quiz her on what judges look for in an award winner...

"It's an interesting thing in our society, isn't it?, that vocational education is less valued," Cindy says when asked why Pearson set up the awards, adding: "There is less of an appreciation of the value that it adds to individuals but also to society at large and into businesses.

"So for us it was about showcasing those amazing learners who are both young people, but also adults, and showing the value of those qualifications to the lives of the individuals. But also more broadly, in terms of career pathways and their relevance." Which she says comes through in the "high calibre" of entrants, from a varied range of different ages, prior attainment, countries and providers, with nominations from colleges, schools and private training providers.

Cindy says there has to be a "robust process" to cut down the longlist of nominees to the list of elite entrants.

When quizzed on what they look for in a winner she emphasised the

importance of character and gave the example of a woman from a few years ago who won while working in the construction sector.

"She was a construction manager on a site, and she did a BTEC in construction, so what it was giving her was a career into STEM, a career into a very male dominated sector – something she was really passionate about – and providing that access for her, which was about a career in a sector where she could apply her knowledge.

"So, I think when you talk about calibre, it's that calibre of person that we're looking for. The confidence that was there in a very young woman."

Another quality the judges are looking for in a winner is high standard of attainment, achieving top grades in their course, and for students who

are role models for other students.

Helping out outside of college, having a sense of social responsibility, is also a key attribute.

Cindy gives another example of a previous winner, who had set up a social enterprise selling tea and giving the proceeds to the tea plantation and the people picking the crop, and another who had done poorly at school "through no fault of his own" who had "flourished" under BTEC.

"It's those sorts of qualities, really," she advises.

However, the awards are not just about celebrating the individual students, but also the sector as a whole, so the awards "shine a spotlight on the value the sector adds and their importance to the wider community".



Cindy Rampersaud





Celebrations at the 2019 BTEC Awards

Even more so during the times of the pandemic: “If you think about the last year that we’ve had with Covid, when you look at the number of key workers we’ve been celebrating, working in healthcare or in logistics or retail.

“Many of those individuals would have gone to an FE college or private training provider probably at the college, many of them would have done a vocational route.”

Many of whom would have done a BTEC, Cindy adds, saying that as many as 25 percent of people who go into the nursing profession have done the qualification.

Going back to her point about how valuable vocational qualifications are often under-rated, she brought up something Bedford College principal Ian Pryce told her: “If you do hair and beauty at a college, you learn customer service, you learn about ordering, you learn about handling money, you learn about branding – you just learn so many different things which means that you can set up your own business, you can work in a salon, you can go work in an office – so many different things you can do.

“So, there are a larger number studying vocational qualifications at age 16, and the majority, as is the case with all

young people, are successes and they are doing what they want to be doing and we should be encouraging them.”

On why people should go for the awards, Cindy said: “It gives students a chance to recognise their talents, their own journey.

“From a personal perspective, I think it’s great for role modelling to others. And I also think for the institutions, it’s great to showcase them and their brilliant teachers and their brilliant learners.

“So I think on a number of levels, it’s really important to apply.”

While she was “delighted” this year’s awards could go ahead online, Cindy

really hopes they will be able to celebrate eleven years of BTEC Awards next year in person.

And in addition to the 2021 winners, Pearson also wants to include BTEC alumni as well, including Olympic champion Max Whitlock, but also: “We’ve got people who are running universities, we’ve got solicitors, we’ve got people in big accountancy firms in senior roles. So there’s a cross section of industries, and people who have been successful in their careers. There are so many of them and I think, for us, it’s about sharing their journeys and sharing their successes, and I think almost saying to the next cohort ‘this will be you in ten years’ time, if not further along’. So it’s about creating that real energy and celebration.”

Organisers are also looking at doing something that is more “interactive” for the audience at the awards, possibly around eSports, she hinted.

So as well as a showcase of how important BTEC students and the providers who deliver them are to our society, next year’s BTEC Awards will not be missing that all important splash of fun as well.



Max Whitlock performing in 2018

JOSEPHINE KIAGA

2019 BTEC Student
of the Year



How social awareness and provider's focus made her an award winner

How a BTEC nominee's social awareness can push them to the front of all the others is exemplified by Josephine, 19, who won the BTEC Student of the Year award in 2019.

She studied BTECs covering media in film and television and performing arts in Tanzania, when she made films covering subjects like female genital mutilation and sexual assault.

"The reason I assume that I won was because I did them on very taboo subjects," she says, "because I knew they were social awareness units, so we were allowed to kind of do whatever we felt was important".

Josephine's socially-conscious films chime with what Pearson's senior vice president for BTEC and apprenticeships Cindy Rampersaud said judges look for in winners: a sense of social responsibility.

"I was very much about social awareness I've always been very passionate

about human rights," Josephine said.

"I grew up in a society where there's a lot of things that don't reflect Western society values. Like there's a lot of misogyny, women are not necessarily allowed to have as much independence. Female genital mutilation still takes place in some villages and some areas in Tanzania. So, I guess the confidence and being able to go against the tide is maybe what pushed [her award nomination]."

Yet Josephine also credits her school with helping her get the most out of the programme: "I was very fortunate at my school as they prioritised BTEC a lot. And so the creative arts department was very hands on, we did a lot of performances, we toured to different countries, so if you were a BTEC student you went out a lot more. You got to work in the field.

"It was a very practical, very vocational, probably one of the more interesting courses."

Which fit her personality well, Josephine says: "I

think the structure of BTEC really works for me, because I'm a very organised person, but I'm also very much of an independent learner I really like to take things into my own hands and learn from my own experience rather than just being spoon fed."

The "cherry on the top" of all the hard work she put into the course was attending the awards, where she said she felt "like a celebrity".

She was entered into the awards by her teacher, who thought she would be "good for it," and Josephine only found out when she reached the second round.

"It was honestly an honour because you feel rewarded. I was doing it because I wanted to get into university, I wasn't doing it because I want it to be awarded."

But, she added, "I got to do something I love and then I also got to get credit for it. You feel like the most amazing person in the world."

Though the self-confessed "very clumsy" Josephine admits to being scared she would drop the glass award, which has remained behind in Tanzania, safe and sound.

The hands-on, practical nature of BTEC has helped in Josephine's further studies at the University of Salford, where she is studying a BA in film production.

**"I've always
been very
passionate
about human
rights"**

"Other students may have had more difficulty adjusting because they're not used to the kind of 'here's the brief and go run with it' structure," she says. "So I do think that BTECs do prepare you if your university ends up being structured that way, because you already know how to work independently."



Josephine receiving her award in 2019



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A distinguishing factor of BTEC award winners, and indeed any BTEC student, is how they go against the mould of what society still expects of certain careers.

Take 26-year-old Megan, for example, who has gone against not only assumptions about her gender, but also the assumption her talents should lead her away from technical education.

She works as a design and application engineer for Trelleborg Antivibration Solutions in Leicester, having got the job after studying a Level 3 course in engineering at Loughborough College, and earning both a bachelor's and master's degree from Aston University.

Her work involves chasing the vibrations out of highways equipment, which could be small boats, diggers, earth movers, even military equipment.

"We're trying to prevent the transfer of vibrations, so this could be from the engine. We work on solutions trying to prevent that," she explained. "Anything that can create a vibration."

She is a strong advocate of BTECs, saying she "never regrets" taking the course, and agreeing it made her "work-ready" for university.

"I don't feel like I overstepped, I just feel like I was me"

Whereas the A-Levels students "absolutely aced exams," Megan says the BTEC students "settled very quickly into the way of life and the way of working with the lecturer, because we were so used to doing it at college".

And she has no regrets about picking a BTEC with the college over staying on at school, an insight she gleaned while she did work experience during her GCSEs.

"Everyone else went to nurseries or hospitals, I actually went to a Land Rover specialist and worked there for two weeks.

MEGAN CHAPEYAMA

2012 BTEC Science and Engineering Student of the Year



How pushing against gender clichés and teacher expectations led to success

"It was then I worked out it wasn't cars I wanted to work on, but I loved figuring things out.

"So then that's why I was like 'no I'm definitely right for going to college to do a BTEC'.

"A lot of my teachers then stopped talking to me because they knew I was leaving."

Through her BTEC, she was able to learn which areas, such as electronics, were not for her: she "absolutely loved" computer-aided design, and loved mechanical engineering, but was not "extremely great" at the infrastructure side, such as buildings.

"But I loved product design, when I could actually just do my own thing, work out my own designs, project manage it the way I wanted to do it.

"And that's what made me choose to go to do product design at Aston."

Yet she admits the BTEC was a "hard stint", as she was the only girl on her course and was "showing up the lads".

They even asked her to "stop performing because you're making us look bad," she recalls.

Despite her obvious talents, Megan was still surprised to be up for Science and Engineering Student of the Year, as "I don't feel like I overstepped, I just feel like I was me. And I loved everything I did

at college".

Megan has also served as a STEM ambassador for Loughborough College, visiting primary schools and educating them by helping them build go-karts over a four to six-week period.

"I think it definitely helped with the fact that I was a girl because a lot of the people were like 'well you can't be an engineer, you're a girl'.



"So helping change that mindset of the younger generation, I really enjoyed.

Megan still fights against being promoted as an engineer who is good because she's a girl: "Being a girl doesn't make me a good engineer.

"I'm a good engineer, and I'm a woman."

MARIUM SHAFIQUE

2020 BTEC Adult
Learner of the Year and
Business and Enterprise
Learner of the Year



How BTEC took her from arriving in the UK to winning two awards and onto university

Never underestimate what trajectory signing up for vocational qualifications can put you on.

A business BTEC with Nelson and Colne College has led Marium, 22, from arriving in the country from Italy, to being accepted on a Bachelor of Science degree with Lancaster University, which she is in her first year of study for now.

"I think you need work experience as a student"

Which is more than a noteworthy achievement, it is literally award-winning.

One she credits to her teachers: "I just saw how my teachers were passionate about this subject and their passion reflected on us students."

She came over to the UK aged 16, and was too old for GCSEs and for school, so had to work her way up at college, while bringing her English up to scratch.

Speaking clearly and confidently, over Zoom, she explained her journey from the BTEC onwards.

"I had really, really good classmates, and my teacher was really good at explaining – they were super intelligent about the subject."

As well as staple elements of the business course, such as marketing, accountancy and economics, when Brexit happened, the course pivoted so students could discuss the issues around it.

What also helped Marium progress in the course was the chance to do work placements with the qualification, after she got to spend time in a law firm and a hospital.

"I think you need work experience as a student," Marium explained, as "you do all of these assignments which, I don't know, I would say they can be overwhelming sometimes.

"But the experience was really helpful as it showed us when you get out there into the real world, everything is practical."

Unlike the other award winners featured in these pages, Marium was denied the in-person ceremony,

as her awards show this year was done virtually, owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Her teachers put her forward for the Business and Enterprise Learner of the Year award, and she said it was "unexpected" for her to win, as her teacher told her loads of students had applied from all over the world, so they said: "I'm not going to promise you anything."

Yet a matter of weeks later, the news came through she had won. Then the next day, Marium found out she had also won the Adult Learner of the Year award.

But she says she is prouder of winning the business award, as: "It was my course."

But she felt "really, really blessed" to be a winner, adding: "I was shocked. I couldn't believe it."

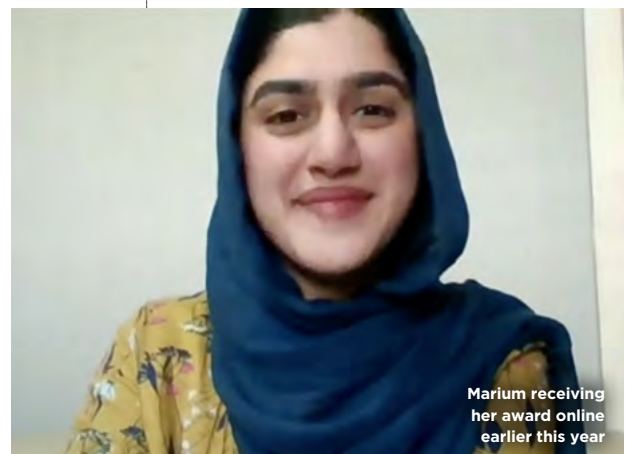
"When my teacher called me, we both couldn't believe it actually happened. Also, because it was the first time ever my college ever won those BTEC Awards."

She is still holding out hope for a physical awards ceremony in London though: "I don't know if they can't do it this year, maybe next year I don't know.

"I don't care, I just want to go to London."

She has yet to decide on a career path after university, saying: "Honestly I don't want to say everything's fixed, but I could be an accountant, I could be a business analyst, or go into marketing or banking.

"It's not like I'm fixed on one thing. I could be doing anything in the future."



Marium receiving her award online earlier this year

Twenty-eight-year-old Grant has had perhaps one of the most interesting careers after the awards, having won BTEC Business Student of the Year and the Student of the Year award at the first ever awards event in 2011.

This was after he did a Level 2 course in enterprise and entrepreneurship at the Peter Jones Enterprise Academy in Manchester, set up by Dragons Den star Peter Jones, where Grant started his own marketing company.

After finishing at the academy, he kept on running the company for three years in Manchester then back home in the north east, but admitted that “ever since I was young, I had in the back of my mind I always wanted to go into teaching”.

So he did a degree with Sunderland University, qualified as an English teacher, and is now head of the department for modern foreign languages at Kingsmeadow Community School in Manchester.

Yet his second career is just as inspired by BTECs as his first career: “I was quite a quiet person really before that course, but it really pushed you of your comfort zone and forced you to do things that you might not ordinarily do.

“And I suppose it did develop my confidence a lot while I was doing the course and the people that I met and interacted with.

“I kind of feel like I’m passing that on to kids, in my confidence and talking about my own personal experiences, and inspire students to think beyond the local



The business brain who has not let teaching quell his enterprising spirit

region about wider opportunities.”

But Grant is not finished with the business world yet, he reckons.

He wants to use the skills he learned setting up a business to go back and set up an enterprise focusing on education: “I’ve often thought, even when I went into education in the first place, I did think gaining experience on the inside, and actually becoming a teacher, and learning about the strengths and weaknesses of the kind of education system will put me in a very good stead in the future, should I wish to leave teaching for a business in education, having had that kind of internal experience”.

When asked what this business could focus on, Grant highlights the “world of opportunity” which has opened up in digital and online learning, so his next venture could focus on creating an online learning product.

It looks like a good idea too: FE Week’s sister publication Schools Week reported last month that almost a quarter of a million pupils have logged on to the government’s flagship

virtual learning space, Oak National Academy.

Asked what it was like to win the awards, Grant called it an “amazing feeling,” especially because it was the first ever.

“I have done so many things that I wouldn't have thought possible”

The ceremony was held in London and he got the chance to meet Radio 1 DJ Scott Mills, who later told the Daily Mirror that Grant “was the most inspirational teenager that he’d met”.

Since the awards, Grant has visited schools and colleges to spread the word about BTEC, and has even got the chance to attend a tea party at Buckingham Palace with Jones.

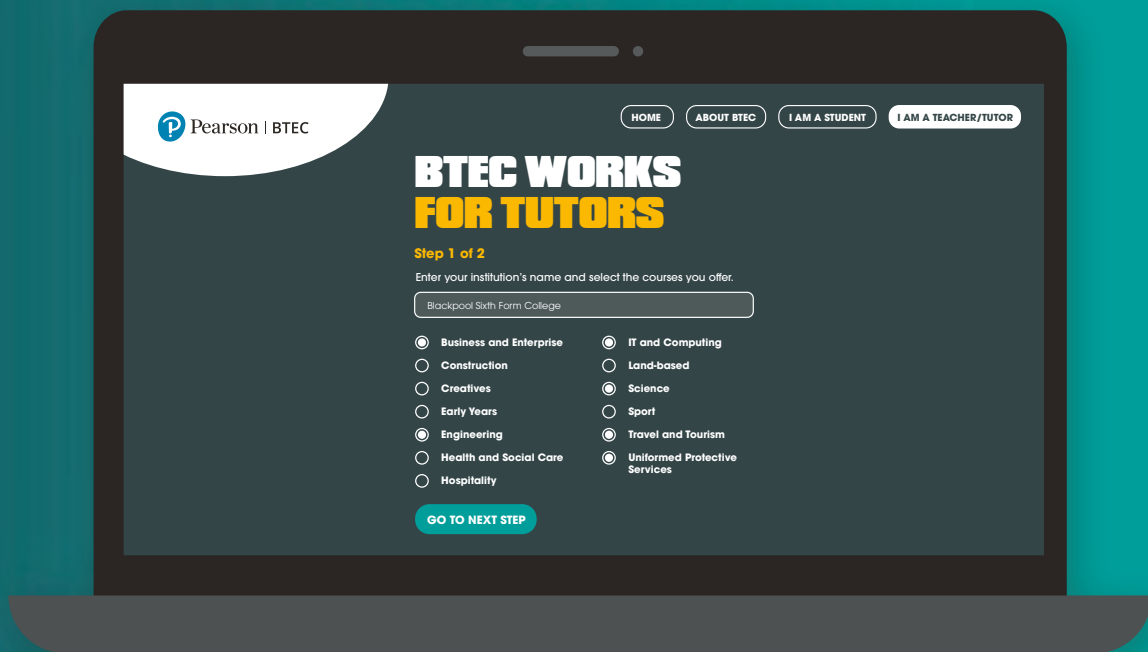
“I have done so many things that I wouldn’t have thought possible. And it all happened off the back of the BTEC course.”



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BTEC Business and Enterprise Learner of the Year
BTEC Child and Social Care Learner of the Year
BTEC Construction Learner of the Year
BTEC Creative Media Learner of the Year
BTEC Engineering Learner of the Year
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BTEC IT and Computing Learner of the Year
BTEC Land-based Learner of the Year
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BTEC Performing Arts Learner of the Year
BTEC Public Services Learner of the Year
BTEC Science Learner of the Year
BTEC Sport Learner of the Year



**BTEC
AWARDS**

How to enter the **BTEC Awards 2021**



1) Go to **btec.co.uk/awards** to submit your nominations. Here you will also find the entry terms and conditions and handy guide to nominating.



2) You and your nominee will need to complete the submission form before the deadline date. Nominations close **2 April 2021**.



3) Your nominations will be put forward to a judging panel, where industry experts will award winners with a Gold, Silver or Bronze award.



Nominators will have been contacted by **7 May 2021** to receive an update about their nomination(s). If you have any questions about your nomination, please contact the BTEC Awards team at **btecawards@pearson.com**

The BTEC Awards will take place on **24 June 2021**



BTEC AWARDS 2021

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“Winning a BTEC Award
motivated me to be the
best and to make myself
the best in the future.”

Lin Min Khant

BTEC Construction Learner of the Year
& BTEC Young Learner of the Year 2020