

International Baccalaureate Career-related Programme students studying at UK higher education institutions: How do they perform in comparison with BTEC students?



Research summary

Summary developed by the IB Research department based on a report prepared by:

Vicky Duxbury, Chris Westlake, Emma Jones and Will Joice, Jisc.

Study managed on behalf of the IB Research department by Dr Olivia Halic.

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Purpose

This study descriptively compared higher education outcomes among students who entered universities in the United Kingdom (UK) with either an International Baccalaureate (IB) Career-related Programme (CP) qualification or a Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC)¹ qualification. Specific outcomes examined within the study included: continuation to the second year of university study, achievement of a first- or upper second-class honours degree, and activity 15 months after completion of the first degree.

¹ BTEC qualifications (Level 3) are offered in many schools and further education colleges around the UK and are studied by 16- to 18-year-old students, typically over two years. They are specialist work-related qualifications and are undertaken in a wide range of vocational subjects, including business studies and engineering.

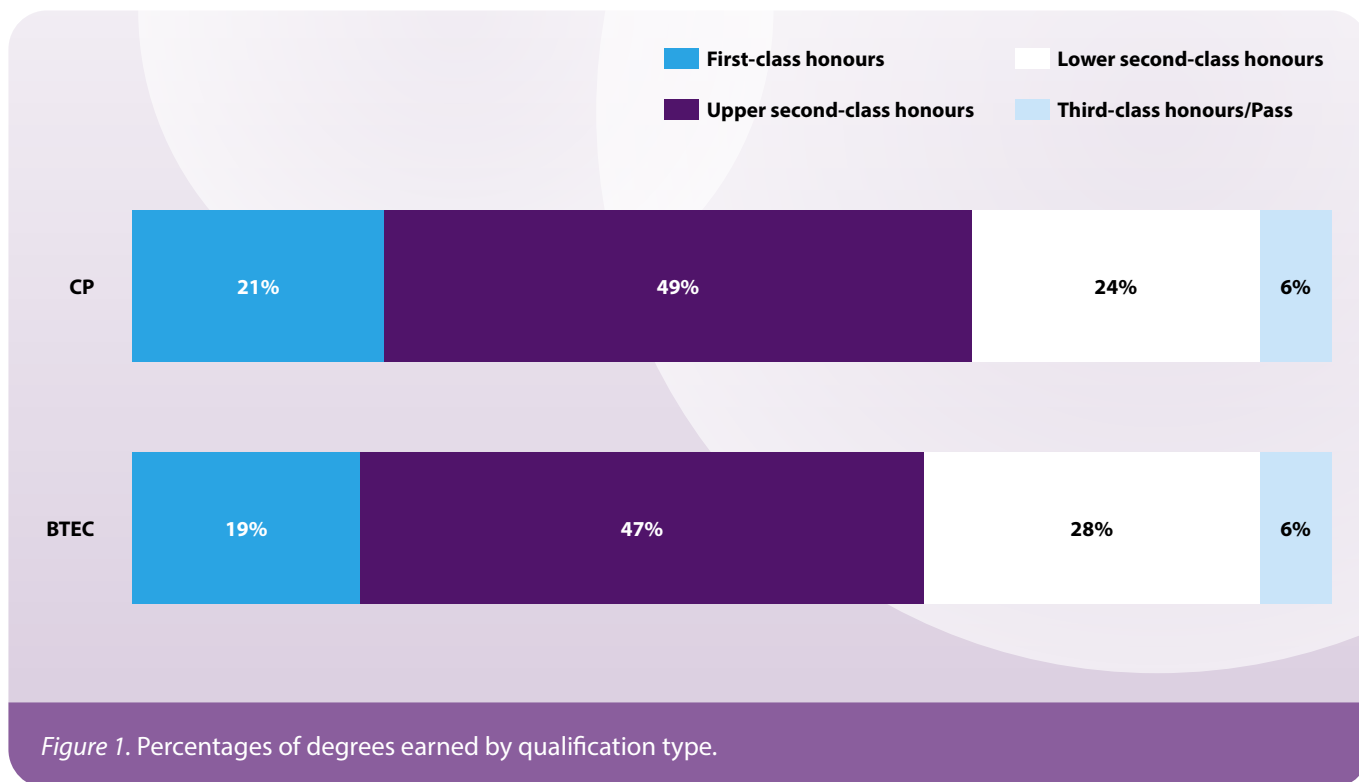
² All analysis related to students who were UK domiciled.

Research design

This study used data sourced from the UK Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and the IB examination data system from 2014–15 to 2018–19. There were a total of 535 CP students that were identifiable in the HESA data within this time frame; however, there were many more BTEC students, with 88,530 students in 2018–19 alone.² As a result, findings related to CP students should be considered exploratory. This study provides descriptive statistics for both the CP and BTEC cohorts.

Higher education and post-university outcomes

- Between the years 2014–15 and 2017–18, both CP and BTEC students had high continuation rates from the first to the second year of university study (89% and 91% respectively).
- Overall, from 2015–16 to 2018–19, a higher percentage of CP students earned a first-class or upper second-class honours degree compared to BTEC students (70% and 66% respectively).



Specifically, 21% of CP students earned a first-class honours degree and 49% earned an upper second-class honours degree; these rates were slightly higher than those of BTEC students (19% and 47% respectively) (Figure 1).

- When looking at specific courses of study, for non-STEM subjects, a higher percentage of CP students achieved a first- or upper second-class honours degree (73%) compared to BTEC students (68%). For STEM subjects, CP and BTEC students were equally likely to earn a first- or upper second-class honours degree (64%).
- Fifteen months after university graduation, a similar percentage of CP (74%) and BTEC graduates (75%) were engaged in work, and a higher proportion of CP graduates (11%) were engaged in further study compared to BTEC graduates (6%).

Conclusions

Although exploratory in nature due to the relatively small number of CP students present in the HESA data, this study provides promising evidence that, overall, CP students are progressing and performing well at university, with nearly 90% continuing to their second year of study and 70% achieving a first- or upper second-class honours degree. Post-university, about equal percentages of CP and BTEC students were engaged in work and a somewhat higher percentage of CP students were engaged in further study compared to BTEC students.

This summary was developed by the IB Research department. A copy of the full report is available at: www.ibo.org/en/research/. For more information on this study or other IB research, please email research@ibo.org.

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