

# **‘Daring to Care’ – Solving the riddle of BTEC student retention in HE**

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More students with **BTEC**  
qualifications studying higher  
education than ever before

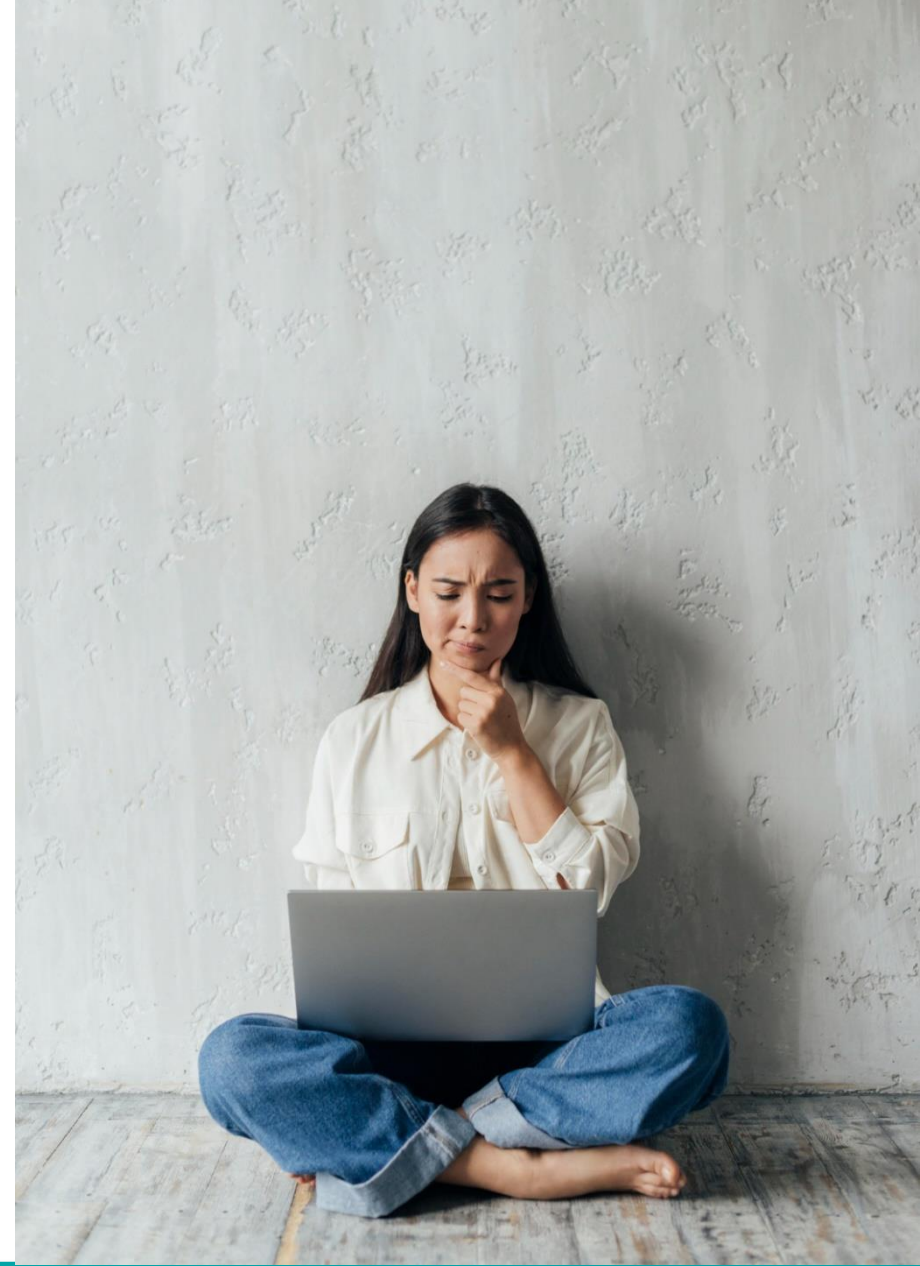
(Bekhradnia & Beech 2018).



**BTEC** students face more challenges (SMF 2018)

They are more likely to **drop out** (Kelly 2017)

# **BTEC** students face greater digital challenges



“... it would be untenable to have a regulatory system which allowed universities to recruit students from underrepresented groups but then set lower expectations for their success.” (OfS 2020)

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We therefore must be cognisant of the **disconnection** created by on-line learning and the effect this has on student retention.

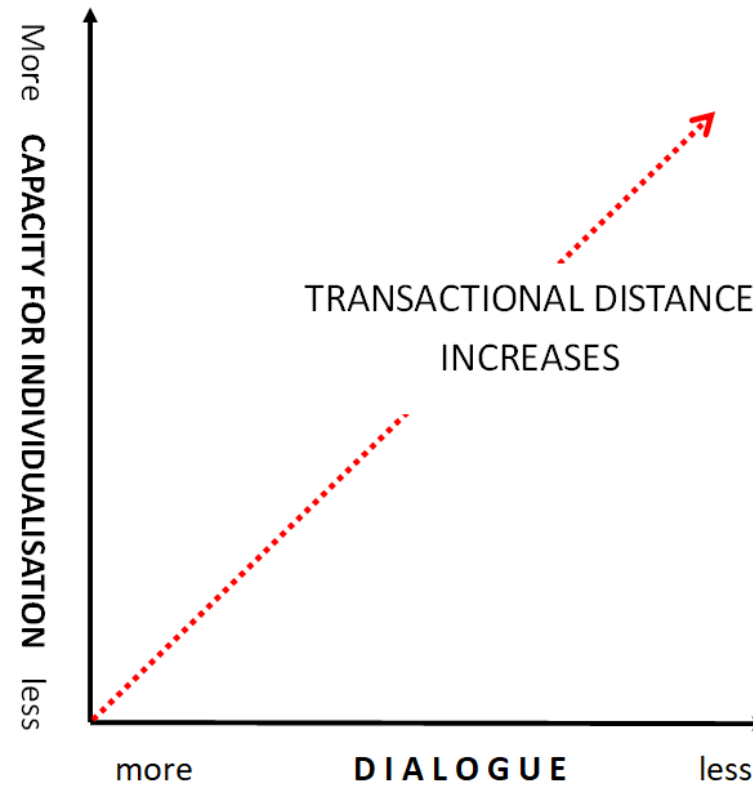
# Student **drop-out**

- No attachment to teachers  
(Brinkworth et al 2009)
- Inadequate teaching (Zepke et al 2014)
- When students feel they do not  
matter (Walker-Gleaves 2019)



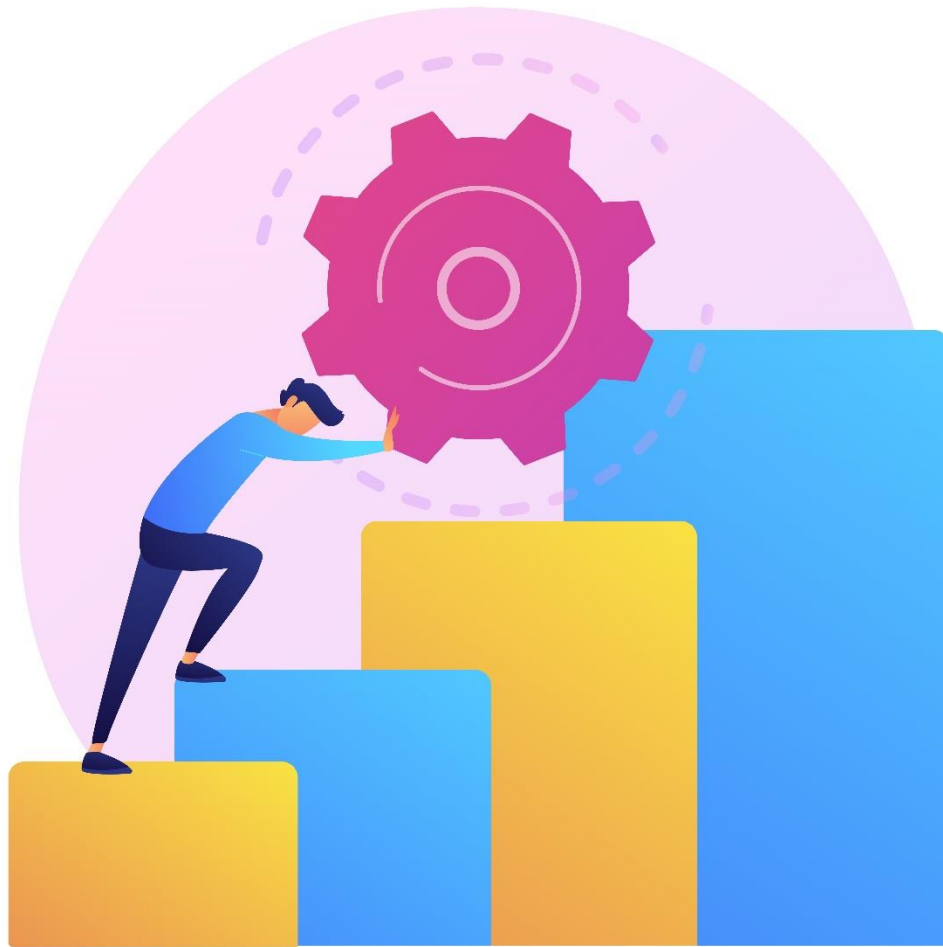
“To persist and succeed teachers need to make students **feel like they are significant**, in their work, their thoughts, their activities and their progress”  
(Docan-Morgan 2011).

## Moore's Transactional Distance Theory (1993)



The communication gap needs to be minimised

(Adapted from Delgaty 2018)



Students need to develop  
**resilience** and **autonomy** in HE,  
not be ‘nannied’ or ‘therapised’!

*‘Tough love’ builds resilience and  
reduces ‘reliance’ – doesn’t it?*

This trope has **visibly failed** BTEC students in higher  
education

Institutions have been looking (heuristically) in the  
**wrong place**

All teachers in HE care, don't they?

Few professional obligations to care.

Students don't think their teachers care (Meyers 2009).

‘Academics’ must treat all students equally objectively,  
**almost disdainfully**, to distance themselves from  
favouritism or ‘misconstrued moments’ (Carr 2005; Anderson et al  
2019).

“Its impossible to care in large groups!”

“How can I care when I’ve got all this content to get through?”

With increased remote  
teaching how can  
teachers and students  
establish and maintain  
these **critical**  
**connections?**



With increased online teaching how can teachers and students establish and maintain these critical connections?

1. Regular, unobstructed caring dialogue

2. All relational exchanges to be respectful, (providing acknowledgement and recognition) reciprocal and timely (Samuel 2017).

### 3. Apply the caring exemplifiers (Walker & Gleaves 2016).



So, how can we make sure **BTEC** students feel they matter?

- **Dialogue over structure** (Moore 1993)
- **Acknowledge, recognise and respect** (Samuel 2017)
- **Show active concern** (Walker & Gleaves 2016)