

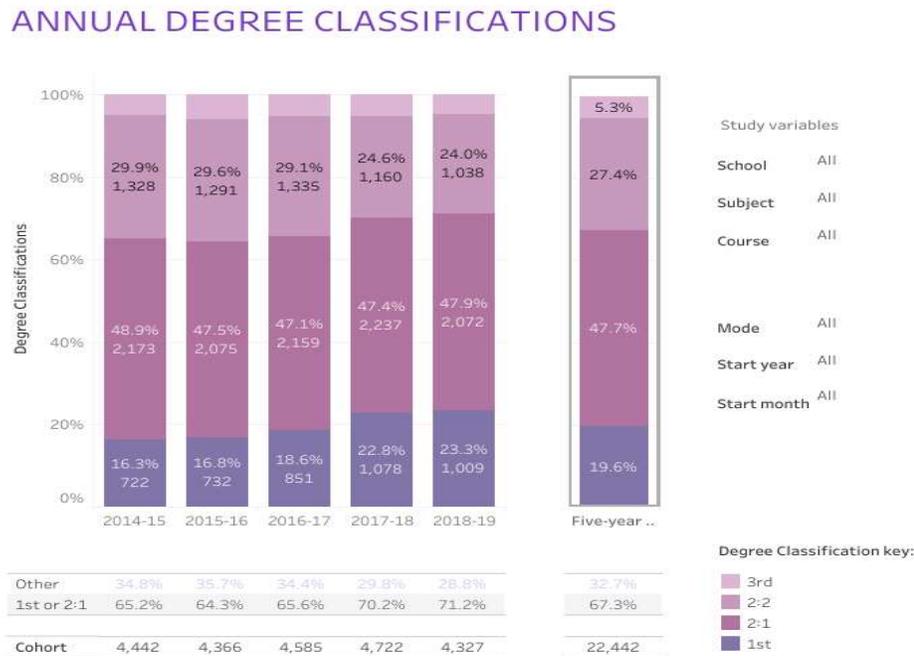
Introduction

Leeds Beckett University’s Degree Outcomes Statement draws on the findings of a wide-ranging review of our institutional degree classification profile and assessment practices for the five-year period: **2014/15 to 2018/19**.

We are confident in our strategies for enabling and safeguarding academic standards and the value of our awards, and we continue to evaluate these. Over the period, we have made significant progress in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, and in the provision of an inclusive learning environment for our students. We welcome the manifest impact of this progress on our students’ outcomes and this work continues with full regard for the maintenance of academic standards.

Institutional Degree Classification Profile

Table 1 – Leeds Beckett University’s Five-Year Degree Classification Profile 2014/15 to 2018/19



Sector analysis of degree classification profiles undertaken by the Office for Students (OfS) highlights statistically significant unexplained increases in first and upper second-degree outcomes (*‘good honours’ degrees*) in the period 2014/15 to 2017/18 inclusive.

As seen in Table 1, our institutional degree classification outcomes profile demonstrates an upward trend in the attainment of first class honours degrees, although our attainment rates are below the sector average throughout the OfS review period. Based on the last year of verified data (2018/19) 23.3% of our students achieve first class honours and 47.9%, an upper second: this equates to a

good honours outcome for 71.2% of our students.

Variance from sector average for first class outcomes has remained consistent, at 5.9% points below average in both 2010/11 and 2017/18. Attainment of 2:1s has declined in the five year period illustrated. Overall, the attainment gap for good honours degrees for our University against the sector average, is reducing from 11.2% points in 2010/11 to 7.3% points in 2017/18.

Cohort Analysis

We consider the following aspects of cohort analysis to be influential in helping to understand increases in good degree attainment (*N.B.: percentage attainment figures are rounded*):

Entry Tariffs

There has been a change in the entry tariffs of the eligible population over the period, with the highest proportion being medium tariff in 2018/19 compared with low tariff at the outset.

There is also a change in the outcomes achieved by students by tariff on entry, with a narrowing of the differential attainment gaps across tariff groups. For example:

- In 2014/15, a markedly higher proportion of high and medium tariff students are achieving good honours compared with other groups. Low tariff students make up the highest proportion of the eligible population.
- In 2018/19 the differential between high and medium tariff good honours attainment is negligible and gaps across all tariff groups have narrowed significantly. Medium tariff students make up the highest proportion of the eligible population.

Gender

There is a significant and enduring differential of circa 12% between the attainment of male students and female students across the review period:

- 64% of male students are currently attaining good honours outcomes against an average of 71% for all students in 2018/19, compared with 76% of female students.
- The numbers of female students recruited has remained constant (2369 in 2013/14 and 2376 in 2018/19) whilst males have fallen (2188 and 1939), so the overall proportion of higher achieving female students has increased.

Ethnicity

The differential attainment of first and upper seconds has been and remains an area of priority action for our University in our access and participation plans. Over this period, attainment by BAME students shows an increasing trend overall (11%) and for some specific groups (period 2014/15 to 2018/19):

- Asian: up 17% points for the period to 59%
- Black: up 17% points for the period to 54%
- Mixed Race: down 7% points for the period to 62%
- Other: up 20% points for the period to 71%
- White: up 6% points for the period to 74%

The eligible population of students is predominantly white and has remained static at 79% of the population.

Disability

The University's ongoing commitment to inclusivity has supported significant improvements in disabled students' performance. Good honours attainment for disabled students in 2018/19 was

73%, up from 65% in 2013/14. Disabled students now make up an increasing proportion of the overall degree award population and their achievements contribute significantly to overall improvements in attainment.

Subject Analysis

Following structural changes undertaken at the University during the period of this review, cognate subjects are now aligned to 11 Academic Schools and a Department of Languages. The student populations within the Schools are disparate and the degree attainment profile of the larger Schools significantly influences the wider institutional position. The detail of degree classification profile by School is held in **Appendix 1** to this statement.

Assessment and Marking Practices

We have clear academic regulations aligned with UK Quality Code Expectations and core practices which set the institutional requirements for effective assessment and marking practices. Our arrangements were considered robust by the QAA HE Review in 2014 and continue to be rigorously implemented.

Course, level, and module outcomes are set in the design and validation of the course. Validation, involving external expert scrutiny, considers the appropriateness of these outcomes and their alignment with the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and relevant qualifications statements, standards and subject benchmarks in addition to PSRB requirements where applicable.

The setting of assessments aligned with these sector reference points is subject to scrutiny and external examiner oversight annually. The standards for assessed work are confirmed via a review of samples of work by independent, institutionally appointed external examiners.

The University has actively supported successive cohorts of academic staff to gain HEA Fellowships and our own 'Developing Excellent Academic Practice' (DEAP) professional development programme, supported by an extensive online repository of resources and guidance, provides further support and direction for robust assessment practice.

External examiners' reports require specific responses to questions which affirm academic standards, comparability of student achievement and the appropriate conduct of processes. They consistently indicate that external examiners are assured and that standards are upheld:

Table 2: Percentage Assurance from External Examiners Relating to Academic Standards, Comparability of Performance and Conduct of Processes 2013/14 to 2018/19

Year	Appropriate Academic Standards	Comparability of Student Performance with Sector	Conduct of Processes
1819	100%	100%	100%
1718	100%	100%	99.9%
1617	100%	99.8%	99.8%
1516	100%	99.6%	99.6%
1415	98%	99.4%	100%
1314	100%	99.6%	100%

The University has engaged in the Advance HE external examiner programme, with a cohort of staff trained in the early stages of the roll out of the distance learning course. We have participated in the developer training for external examiners led by Advance HE, to inform our approach to external examiner development.

We have engaged with the FHEQ degree classification descriptors and used these to review and

restate institutional marking conventions, alongside the FHEQ threshold expectations. Revised degree marking conventions will be implemented from 2020/21 and embedded within our practice.

Academic Governance

The University's governance arrangements: our deliberative committee structures, our Framework for Academic Assurance and Enhancement, the Academic Regulations and in-year annual reporting through Academic Quality and Standards Committee, Academic Board and to the Board of Governors; provides effective oversight of academic standards, qualification outcomes, external examiner reporting, course review and enhancement, courses' continued academic good standing and associated action planning. Deans provide assurance of effective School level processes with institutional oversight and evidence of assurance conducted via committee reporting structures.

Our Academic Board and our Board of Governors have reviewed and approved this statement.

As part of our wider degree standards review, we have undertaken a survey and will be undertaking further follow up work with Schools to reflect on assessment practices and how we provide further support for consistent practice across our University, whilst reflecting the distinctive subject contexts.

Our Academic Board has approved strengthened regulations concerned with assessment protocols for 2020/21. As appropriate, we will deploy our continuous/annual audit processes to ensure that clear expectations for the setting, marking and moderation of assessment, as articulated within new annexes to the Academic Regulations (3a and 3b), are being consistently and rigorously applied. We will reflect on further staff development or guidance requirements in support of these clear expectations.

Collaborative provision delivered in partnership is subject to similar scrutiny and requirements. Schools oversee the assessment and marking practices of partners and will scrutinize, sample and moderate assessed work prior to the assiduous application of external examining. A separate collaborative provision annual report is received and discussed via our committees for ongoing oversight.

Classification Algorithms

The Bachelor's Degree with Honours is awarded for the attainment of a minimum of 120 credit points at Level 4, 120 credit points at Level 5, and 120 credit points at Level 6. The University awards these credit points where a student has:

- achieved the requirements for level progression from Level 4 to Level 5, and from Level 5 to Level 6, or has been admitted with advanced standing to level 5 or 6;
- pursued a course of study of 120 credit points at Level 6 or above (including any recognition of prior learning);
- submitted in all specified components of assessment;
- achieved the overall learning outcomes for the award;
- achieved an average of 40% or more in modules equivalent to 100 credit points at Level 6 or above;
- achieved an average of 30% or more in each module studied;
- achieved an overall average of 40% or more across all modules studied at this level.

Algorithm One - Honours Degree Classification:

In determining the class of Bachelor's Degree with Honours to be recommended, a Board of Examiners should take account of the weighted average of the best 100 credits at levels 5 (weighted

at 25%) and 6 (weighted at 75%)

Algorithm Two -Treatment of Borderline Performance:

If the final weighted average for an award is within 2% points of the next classification boundary then the award will be upgraded to that classification, provided that 50% or more of the credit achieved at level 6 is in the higher classification band.

Algorithm Exceptions

Students who are direct entrants to L6 awards (top up degrees) have an algorithm applied which defines an average of performance at L6 only.

We have a small number of awards in creative practice disciplines which apply an algorithm which considers the performance of L6 and a less than standard number of credits at L5. It is established practice within creative disciplines to allow students to explore the parameters of their practice in level 5 without fear of failure or concerns about the impact of experimentation on final grades. The consensus position is that this approach ultimately strengthens the final level portfolio/ exhibition/ presentation of practice. The approach is commonly used in the sector for such subjects.

Integrated Masters

The profile of achievement for an Integrated masters award is as follows for the student who has achieved the requirements for level progression from Level 4 to Level 5, from Level 5 to Level 6, from Level 6 to Level 7 or has been admitted directly beyond the first level of the course;

- pursued a course of study of 120 credit points at Level 7 or above;
- submitted in all specified components of assessment;
- achieved the overall learning outcomes for the award;
- achieved an average of 40% or more in modules equivalent to 100 credit points at Level 7 or above;
- achieved an average of 40% or more in each module studied;
- achieved an overall average of 50% or more across all modules studied at this level

Reassessment and Repeat Provision

- Students may be reassessed in up to 100% of the modules within a level
- All reassessment is undertaken at component level (i.e. those summative assessments which contribute to the module grade)
- All reassessed work is capped at 40%
- Students are offered a repeat part level or repeat level opportunity at the discretion of the Progression and Award Board.
- Generally, failure in more than 50% of the modules within a level following reassessment will elicit a repeat level opportunity.
- Generally, failure in less than 50% of the modules within a level following reassessment will elicit a repeat part-level opportunity.
- If a repeat is offered at the final level, all prior passed module marks are retained

Institutionally we have reflected upon our present approaches to algorithms and treatment of the borderline. We are considering potential changes to our algorithm, for example to include all module outcomes at levels 5 and 6, retaining the present weighting (25:75) to reflect exit velocity and the need for students to develop over this period, particularly given our access and participation student

profile. This provides time for students to develop their potential and recognizes the time needed for some students to develop this added value.

We are also considering further our approach to treatment of the borderline. The treatment of the borderline was brought in to align our practice with the sector.

As in the wider sector, we have been encouraged in recent years by some external examiners to use the full range of marks in assessment. This, combined with the effect of the borderline treatment and the algorithm, may merit further consideration. Some element of borderline treatment is considered advisable to recognize that numerical algorithms do not necessarily deliver equitable outcomes in combination.

Teaching Practices and Learning Resources

A range of enhancements to our curriculum, teaching and assessment practices have been introduced over the review period and have contributed to student degree outcomes. The undergraduate curriculum refocus outcomes introduced in 2012/13 supported our first graduates from this revised curriculum in 2014/15, the year that we have experienced a significant increase in first class degree outcomes. The QAA HE Review in 2014 confirmed that sector expectations concerning assessment practice were fully met and risks to the standard and quality of assessments were deemed low, with the review team noting ways in which our University was building on its focus on assessment following the identification of this as an area of good practice in the previous QAA review.

In 2016/17 we introduced our new Education Strategy, aligned with our revised strategic planning framework and key performance indicators, which have together embedded a range of key developments impacting on student achievement. These have been supported by a range of pedagogical and assessment development activities and resources, and a revised student support framework. This has enabled more inclusive practice, a range of specialist support for disabled students and mental health, and action in support of our APP.

In tandem, our Strategic Plan has focused on delivering an excellent education and experience for all our students and has driven improvements in student satisfaction, measured through NSS KPIs, which clearly evidence students' own perceptions of enhanced teaching, learning and assessment practices.

In parallel we have reviewed and revised academic structures and leadership, introducing academic Schools, led by Deans, Heads of Subject and new Course Director roles, to provide a clear focus of responsibility and accountability for academic standards and quality and academic homes for students. We are continuing to invest significantly in our estate to enable all schools to establish a sense of belonging for students. This has supported improvements in student satisfaction overall and with learning resources, assessment and feedback, academic support and placements.

The development of embedded and connected support from a reconfigured employability and business engagement team, has driven increases in both work based and work related learning and assessment, developing confidence and competence in students' engagement with new assessment strategies which target improvements in progression to highly skilled employment destinations.

Identification of Good Practice and Actions

Our survey into assessment practice undertaken across our academic structures has provided assurance that colleagues are routinely using external reference points (professional body guidance/ subject benchmark statements/ the FHEQ) when defining assessment tasks for a given H.E. level and credit volume.

Clear assessment briefs and marking criteria are shared with students and externality is applied at the point the assessment is set and marked. Second marking, standardization and moderation practices are routinely applied, and Module Boards maintain robust oversight of module performance across each level of study to identify outlying outcomes or other assessment concerns.

Planned Actions

Academic standards

- a) Embed new FHEQ degree outcomes descriptors - *ongoing*
- b) Review balance of regulation and guidance for 2020/21 – *completed Aug 2020*
- c) Review allocation of external examiners and update guidance and briefing for external examiners - *ongoing*

Assessment and marking practice:

- a) Engage in delivery of Advance HE course – paused for pandemic period
- b) Review balance of regulation and guidance for 2020/21 – completed Aug 2020
- c) Reflect further on staff development and external examiner development following advance HE course delivery – paused for pandemic period
- d) Review opportunities for further subject-based calibration of outcomes and mentoring for new/ part time staff members - *to take forward in 2020/21 and 2020/22*

Further Analysis and Review

- a) Engage subjects with atypical degree classification profiles in further review and analysis of degree outcomes and associated assessment practices - *to take forward in 2020/21 and 2021/22*
- b) Reflect further on the six Principles for Effective Degree Algorithm Design (UUK - June 2020) and the necessity for review of our algorithmic practice - *to take forward in 2020/21 and 2021/22*

Risks and Challenges

We have identified some variation of degree outcomes between subjects when compared to sector subject averages. Whilst this can vary dependent on student intake or characteristics, we propose to undertake further follow up work to understand the higher proportions of firsts and upper seconds in two specific schools (Education and Built Environment Engineering and Computing) and one subject group (Film, Music and Performing Arts).

END OF STATEMENT