

# Degree Outcome Statement

## Institutional Degree Classification Profile

The institutional degree classification profile for all students for the past five academic years is set out in the attached table.

Whilst the proportion of first class degrees has increased over the period, it has remained relatively stable over the last four years, with a slight reduction in 2019/20. The improved outcomes are seen across all student groups, although some awarding gaps remain between students with A-level and non-A-level qualifications; between home and overseas students; and between white and BAME students. The outcomes for students in the College of Engineering, Design and Physical Sciences are above the University average, and reflect the greater proportion of students who undertake a work placement or study for an integrated Master's degree; both recognised as positively influencing degree outcomes.

We believe the improved outcomes are a reflection of the deliberate focus for the past 10 years to improve the quality of learning and teaching, including the mandatory development of staff new to teaching. We have focussed on programme design, well-defined learning outcomes, transparent assessment and marking practices with clear expectations, and support for students. For the past four years we have increased our efforts to address the observed awarding gaps, as set out in our [Access and Participation Plan](#).

As can be seen in the data, the changes made by the University in response to COVID-19, particularly in relation to teaching, learning and assessment have had little effect on the overall degree classification profile and there is no evidence of degree inflation. However, of note is the increase in first class degrees for Asian (+1.1%) and Black students (+2.5%), whereas a decrease is seen for White students (-1.3%).

## Assessment & Marking Practices

In order to be awarded a degree, students must demonstrate that they have successfully achieved the approved learning outcomes for the programme. These are defined in the Programme Specification, and achievement is evidenced through successful attainment of the required assessments.

The University's assessments are governed by Senate Regulation 4, which includes information on appointment of External Examiners and extenuating circumstances. Assessments must be approved by the internal Panel of Examiners following consultation with the independent External Examiner. Marking schemes/criteria and University grade descriptors are used to ensure a consistent approach to marking, which is further assured through internal moderation or double-marking of assessments, and the sampling and review of assessments by External Examiners.

The module grades and the integrity and fairness of the assessment process are confirmed by the Panel of Examiners. The Board of Examiners make progression and award decisions on behalf of Senate. External Examiners are members of both the Panels and Boards of Examiners. Academic conduct and academic appeals are governed by Senate regulations 6 and 12, respectively, ensuring a transparent and consistent approach applies to all students.

## Academic Governance

The University sets and maintains its standards by having in place [a strong academic governance model](#) that provides oversight of programme approval, assessment, marking, annual monitoring and periodic reviews. Externality is key to this governance, and as recommended by the QAA UK Quality Code, their Advice and Guidance on Course Design and Development, and on External Expertise, the following are in place:

- External reviewers, including from Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) and accrediting bodies, provide independent scrutiny of programme development and approval, and of periodic programme reviews.
- Adherence to external reference points, including QAA subject benchmark statements, QAA Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and requirements of external bodies.
- External Examiners, PSRBs and accrediting bodies provide assurance that our practices are sound and that the expected FHEQ and professional standards are met. External Examiners provide annual reports, which are responded to by the programme team and discussed at Boards of Studies, with oversight by the College Education Committees to ensure that issues are appropriately addressed and actions monitored. The University Education Committee, and subsequently Senate, receive a University-level summary report that highlights any issues and good practice arising from the External Examiners' scrutiny.

Central to the University's governance of academic standards is the University Education Committee. Reporting to Senate, it is responsible for the oversight and development of University-wide quality assurance processes. Senate is the University's principal body responsible for the regulation, governance and quality assurance of the academic work of the University.

Council, our governing body, receives reports from Senate on the University's academic work at each of its meetings, and further assures itself through independent internal audits and the engagement of external reviewers, including for this Statement.

## **Degree Algorithm**

The algorithms used for the calculation of awards are detailed in Senate Regulation 2, and apply to all programmes, including those delivered through partnership arrangements. There are strict criteria for the consideration of borderline candidates. The final award is based on a weighted grade point average (GPA) of Level 5 (1/3) and Level 6 (2/3) with the following restrictions:

- all Level 5 and 6 marks contribute to the award;
- no award can be made with an F (fail) grade in the profile;
- the volume of credits at E (narrow fail) grade is restricted (e.g. none allowed for the award of a first class degree);
- no condonation is permitted.

Each year students take 120 credits of study and assessment. Reassessments are limited to 40 credits at Levels 5 and 6; following a review the reassessment limit at Level 4 was increased to 120 credits from 2019/20. This recognised that Brunel was out of line with the sector; that for many students it takes time to adapt to the demands of university-level study; and the fact that Level 4 is used as a progression point where the outcome does not contribute to the final award. All reassessments are capped at D- (threshold grade), and no student (in the absence of extenuating circumstances) will have more than two opportunities per assessment.

To further assure ourselves of the integrity of our awards the University undertook a review of rounding practices and the criteria used for consideration of borderline students in 2018/19. This revealed that there was inconsistent use of rounding across the institution, that our borderline criteria were overly complex and the zone of consideration could be considered generous compared to some of the sector. We have addressed these issues: a Rounding Policy was introduced in September 2019 that specifies that rounding at module level, where multiple assessments are combined to give a single mark, is restricted to one decimal place. The zone of consideration has been restricted to 0.5 grade points (equivalent to 1%) below the borderline, and any uplift will require a minimum of 50% of the grade profile to be in the higher class. These changes required us to have due regard to CMA compliance, and therefore came into effect for students joining Level 4 from September 2019; the impact of these changes will not be measurable until summer 2022 when the 2019/20 cohort graduates. However, based on modelling we expect to see a seven percentage points reduction in the proportion of first class degrees awarded.

## **Learning and Teaching**

Brunel has been recognised nationally for its innovation in teaching practices and learning resources, in particular related to assessment: we received a Collaborate Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE) in 2016 for our work on Integrated Programme Assessment (IPA), and in 2019 for Digital Examinations; as sector-leading initiatives they have been extensively shared across the sector, and are being adopted or adapted by many institutions. The IPA approach provides a mechanism to address overassessment by using synoptic assessments that challenges students to integrate information and apply it to new contexts. From our own evidence base, we know that requiring fewer but more heavily weighted assessments increase student achievement. The use of Digital Examinations supports all

students who increasingly find it difficult to write by hand for long periods of time, and the digital footprint through all stages of the assessment process facilitates investigations where there are concerns about the integrity of the process.

The strategic focus on learning and teaching over the past 10 years has had a particular emphasis on recognition and support for staff. A new Academic Education career pathway for those that provide leadership of learning and teaching practice and innovation within their departments and across the University was introduced in 2013/14. Following a review of our support for staff in relation to professional development related to learning and teaching, a new Academic Professional Development Unit was launched in August 2020 that provides a range of development opportunities to enhance academic practice. In 2019/20, 487 members of staff were recognised as Fellows of the Higher Education Academy, including 29 Senior Fellows and 8 Principal Fellows. The Academy for Transformation of Learning and Teaching was set up in September 2018 and has become a forum for an inclusive Brunel community of practice; the first cohort of Academy Fellows are supporting staff at all levels across the University to enhance their practice whilst contributing to the bigger debates on how to tackle issues such as awarding gaps and inclusion.

## **COVID-19 Response**

The framework for our COVID-19 response was governed by the Emergency Senate Regulations which came into force in March 2020. These ensured the continuation of the University's standards, setting out requirements for academic governance, academic integrity and quality assurance, but allowing a degree of flexibility so that the University was best placed to respond to the circumstances.

The University applied the overarching principle that students should be supported to progress or complete their studies as intended, but with decisions about progression and awards based on evidenced achievement. Modifications were made to the Extenuating Circumstances Procedure to allow students who were unable to take their assessments in spring, or whose performance may have been adversely affected, to take their assessments later in the summer. The University did not implement a grade average safety net. The University has used Digital Examinations for a number of years, and had the infrastructure in place for moving all assessments online from March 2020. Examinations were undertaken remotely, with assessments modified to make them suitable for such a format, and the data presented in this Degree Outcome Statement demonstrate that the University has successfully maintained standards, which we believe is the best Covid-19 mitigation we can provide to our students.

## **Identifying good practice, and actions**

The operation of University-wide award algorithms and associated award regulations (introduced in 2009) is considered to be best practice, so that all students can be confident that their awards are the result of transparent and fair processes.

The content of this statement relates to information that is regularly monitored, including degree outcomes by characteristics; our processes and procedures; and governance structures. The Degree Outcomes Statement will be reviewed annually to ensure that the information provided on our external website is accurate.

## Degree Classification Outcomes

			2019/0	2018/9	2017/8	2016/7	2015/6	TOTAL
University (All students)	1st		25.8%	26.1%	25.2%	25.1%	22.8%	25.0%
	2:1		51.2%	49.6%	51.0%	49.9%	51.2%	50.6%
	2:2		20.9%	21.9%	20.6%	22.5%	22.7%	21.7%
	3rd		2.1%	2.4%	3.3%	2.5%	3.3%	2.7%
Age (All students)	Young (<21)	1st	25.5%	25.9%	24.8%	25.6%	23.0%	25.0%
		2:1	51.8%	50.9%	51.9%	50.5%	52.1%	51.5%
		2:2	20.7%	20.8%	20.0%	21.7%	21.6%	20.9%
		3rd	2.0%	2.4%	3.3%	2.3%	3.3%	2.6%
	Mature (>21)	1st	28.4%	26.9%	28.0%	21.7%	21.5%	25.2%
		2:1	45.5%	40.3%	44.0%	45.8%	45.5%	44.2%
		2:2	23.1%	30.2%	24.6%	28.0%	29.5%	27.2%
		3rd	3.0%	2.6%	3.4%	4.5%	3.4%	3.4%
Disability (All students)	No Disability	1st	25.4%	25.5%	24.9%	25.0%	22.7%	24.7%
		2:1	51.5%	49.5%	50.9%	49.5%	51.0%	50.5%
		2:2	21.2%	22.4%	20.9%	22.8%	22.9%	22.0%
		3rd	1.9%	2.6%	3.3%	2.6%	3.5%	2.8%
	Disability	1st	28.1%	29.3%	26.5%	25.5%	23.9%	26.9%
		2:1	49.3%	50.3%	51.6%	52.4%	52.9%	51.1%
		2:2	19.7%	19.2%	18.9%	20.1%	21.0%	19.7%
		3rd	3.0%	1.3%	3.0%	2.0%	2.2%	2.3%
Entry Quals (Home students)	A-Level	1st	29.9%	31.6%	30.5%	29.7%	29.2%	30.2%
		2:1	50.8%	50.3%	53.1%	54.7%	54.7%	52.6%
		2:2	17.3%	16.6%	14.8%	14.2%	14.4%	15.5%
		3rd	2.1%	1.6%	1.6%	1.4%	1.8%	1.7%
	A-Level and Other	1st	23.5%	21.0%	21.7%	22.8%	22.2%	22.2%
		2:1	52.9%	53.2%	49.8%	50.9%	51.8%	51.8%
		2:2	22.3%	23.0%	24.6%	24.0%	23.5%	23.5%
		3rd	1.2%	2.8%	3.9%	2.3%	2.4%	2.5%
	Not A-Level	1st	14.8%	19.9%	19.0%	19.3%	14.5%	17.5%
		2:1	51.3%	44.2%	49.7%	42.0%	52.2%	47.8%
		2:2	31.1%	32.3%	26.2%	34.9%	27.3%	30.4%
		3rd	2.8%	3.6%	5.1%	3.7%	6.0%	4.2%
Ethnicity (All students)	White	1st	36.9%	38.2%	36.9%	36.0%	33.3%	36.3%
		2:1	48.7%	47.3%	47.8%	48.6%	50.3%	48.5%
		2:2	12.4%	12.9%	13.1%	14.4%	14.6%	13.5%
		3rd	2.0%	1.6%	2.1%	1.1%	1.7%	1.7%
	Asian	1st	22.7%	21.6%	19.5%	20.8%	16.9%	20.4%
		2:1	52.4%	50.5%	52.2%	47.9%	51.9%	51.1%
		2:2	22.7%	25.3%	24.4%	27.8%	26.5%	25.2%
		3rd	2.2%	2.6%	3.9%	3.4%	4.7%	3.3%
	Black	1st	15.8%	13.3%	14.6%	10.0%	14.1%	13.7%
		2:1	51.8%	52.2%	54.9%	58.2%	53.0%	53.9%
		2:2	29.0%	30.9%	27.4%	28.8%	29.8%	29.2%
		3rd	3.4%	3.6%	3.1%	3.0%	3.0%	3.3%
	Other	1st	21.0%	19.4%	20.0%	24.3%	19.7%	20.8%
		2:1	52.4%	50.7%	52.2%	49.8%	49.8%	51.1%
		2:2	25.8%	27.2%	23.0%	22.5%	26.2%	25.0%
		3rd	0.7%	2.7%	4.9%	3.3%	4.3%	3.1%

Fee Status (All students)	Home/EU	1st	27.2%	27.6%	27.3%	26.8%	25.4%	26.9%
		2:1	50.6%	49.5%	51.2%	51.2%	53.3%	51.1%
		2:2	20.0%	20.6%	18.9%	19.9%	18.7%	19.6%
		3rd	2.1%	2.2%	2.7%	2.1%	2.7%	2.4%
	Overseas	1st	16.7%	15.1%	12.9%	16.2%	9.3%	13.9%
		2:1	54.5%	50.3%	49.9%	43.0%	40.5%	47.5%
		2:2	26.8%	30.9%	30.4%	35.9%	43.6%	33.7%
		3rd	1.9%	3.7%	6.8%	4.9%	6.7%	4.9%
Gender (All students)	Male	1st	25.9%	25.1%	24.2%	22.5%	23.7%	24.3%
		2:1	49.4%	49.8%	47.7%	47.7%	47.7%	48.5%
		2:2	21.4%	21.9%	23.2%	26.7%	24.7%	23.5%
		3rd	3.3%	3.2%	4.9%	3.1%	3.9%	3.7%
	Female	1st	25.6%	27.1%	26.1%	27.8%	21.8%	25.7%
		2:1	53.0%	49.5%	54.4%	52.2%	55.0%	52.8%
		2:2	20.4%	21.9%	17.9%	18.0%	20.5%	19.8%
		3rd	0.9%	1.6%	1.6%	2.0%	2.7%	1.7%
POLAR Categories (Home students)	Q1	1st	29.9%	25.0%	26.9%	28.4%	34.7%	29.0%
		2:1	50.6%	54.3%	53.8%	51.9%	54.7%	53.1%
		2:2	14.9%	18.5%	18.3%	19.8%	9.5%	16.1%
		3rd	4.6%	2.2%	1.1%	0.0%	1.1%	1.8%
	Q2	1st	30.9%	32.8%	27.9%	25.6%	27.5%	28.8%
		2:1	52.1%	46.9%	50.8%	51.8%	54.4%	51.2%
		2:2	16.4%	18.1%	18.4%	20.6%	17.0%	18.2%
		3rd	0.6%	2.3%	2.8%	2.0%	1.1%	1.8%
	Q3	1st	23.9%	25.9%	27.0%	31.5%	25.2%	26.7%
		2:1	52.1%	52.2%	50.9%	46.9%	56.2%	51.7%
		2:2	22.1%	19.6%	20.6%	19.0%	15.3%	19.4%
		3rd	1.8%	2.3%	1.5%	2.6%	3.2%	2.3%
	Q4	1st	22.7%	23.0%	24.3%	24.6%	21.8%	23.2%
		2:1	52.3%	50.7%	52.7%	50.9%	52.9%	51.9%
		2:2	21.9%	24.1%	19.3%	21.7%	22.7%	21.9%
		3rd	3.1%	2.2%	3.7%	2.9%	2.7%	2.9%
	Q5	1st	28.0%	29.8%	28.0%	24.8%	25.3%	27.3%
		2:1	50.1%	47.9%	51.7%	54.0%	52.6%	51.1%
		2:2	20.5%	20.1%	17.7%	19.8%	18.9%	19.4%
		3rd	1.3%	2.2%	2.6%	1.4%	3.3%	2.2%
Subject Area (All students)	College of Business, Arts & Social Sciences	1st	21.7%	23.0%	22.4%	20.6%	18.7%	21.3%
		2:1	56.5%	52.0%	52.0%	51.1%	53.1%	53.0%
		2:2	19.6%	23.2%	22.7%	25.9%	24.9%	23.1%
		3rd	2.2%	1.7%	2.9%	2.5%	3.3%	2.5%
	College of Engineering, Design & Physical Sciences	1st	34.8%	31.7%	32.3%	33.0%	30.3%	32.4%
		2:1	44.4%	46.4%	43.7%	45.3%	46.6%	45.3%
		2:2	18.2%	17.9%	18.5%	19.1%	19.7%	18.7%
		3rd	2.6%	4.0%	5.6%	2.6%	3.4%	3.7%
	College of Health, Medicine & Life Sciences	1st	24.4%	25.2%	22.1%	24.7%	23.0%	23.9%
		2:1	48.0%	48.6%	58.1%	53.0%	52.8%	51.9%
		2:2	26.3%	24.3%	18.5%	19.7%	21.2%	22.2%
		3rd	1.3%	1.9%	1.2%	2.5%	2.9%	1.9%