University of Cumbria Degree Outcomes Statement 2023

First Degree Graduates' Classifications (FT & PT) - Headcounts (rounded down to nearest five):

	Total Headcount (Rounded)	First Class Honours	Upper Second Class Honours	First and Upper Second Combined	Lower Second Class Honours	Third Class Honours / Pass
2016/17	**1555**	260	690	950	430	175
2017/18	**1425**	310	650	960	345	120
2018/19	**1515**	370	595	970	405	140
2019/20	**1560**	425	655	1080	370	115
2020/21	**1505**	475	615	1090	285	130

First Degree Graduates' Classifications (FT & PT) - Percentages:

	Total Headcount (Rounded)	First Class Honours	Upper Second Class Honours	First and Upper Second Combined	Lower Second Class Honours	Third Class Honours / Pass
2016/17	**1555**	16.7%	44.4%	61.1%	27.5%	11.4%
2017/18	**1425**	21.8%	45.6%	67.4%	24.2%	8.4%
2018/19	**1515**	24.5%	39.3%	63.9%	26.8%	9.3%
2019/20	**1560**	27.1%	42.0%	69.1%	23.6%	7.3%
2020/21	**1519**	31.6%	40.9%	72.4%	18.9%	8.6%

(data extracted April 2022)

At 72.4%, undergraduate in 2020/21 improved on the previous year. Improvements in outcomes were consolidated across most subject areas across the University in 2020/21.

Student work submitted and assessed during 2020/21 was subject to the application of the Emergency and Additional Regulations arising out of the Covid19 pandemic and we continue to undertake analysis of the impact of the Emergency and Additional Regulations on students' achievement and on the overall profile at award level. Nationally, there is some evidence to suggest that an unexpected impact of COVID-19 for students was been to support a more exclusive focus on study in 2020/21 (as travel, socialising and part-time work were all curtailed by lockdowns and tiers of restriction) and thus an improvement in academic outcomes. This helps to explain the maintenance of high levels of overall achievement despite the fact that the 2020/21 academic year saw students experience significant disruption – much greater than that experienced in 2019/20 - to their learning on campus and in many cases to their placements as a direct result of the pandemic.

NOTE: The fall in outcomes seen in 2018/19 was in part due to an increase in the number of students undertaking top-up degrees; with across the sector, students undertaking 'top-up' degrees tending to achieve lower outcomes than students completing full Bachelor's degrees. Considerable work was subsequently focussed on this area leading to improvements in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

Having considered our data in terms of particular student characteristics, we have identified:

- There continues to be a gap in degree attainment between White students and that of students from all Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic groups, but for both Asian and Black students the rate of attainment has improved and the gap has narrowed. Small numbers of students in the other Minority Ethnicity groups makes trend analysis invalid. This is an area of targeted work across the University
- The performance of mature students has improved for the second year in a row, narrowing the gap with Young students
- There has been an improvement in the attainment of First and Upper Second class degrees for students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods, with attainment for those from the lowest-participation neighbourhoods now significantly above that of students from the highest-participation neighbourhoods.
- The gap in degree outcomes between students from backgrounds of socioeconomic disadvantage has improved slightly for the second year in a row, and this remains an area of focus for the University.
- Students with a known disability continue to achieve above the student population as a whole

The University is committed to removing barriers to attainment and to providing opportunities and support to all its students. The University's Access and Participation Plan sets out the range of positive steps it is taking to close attainment gaps for students with particular characteristics.

2. Assessment and marking practices

The University of Cumbria assures itself that assessment criteria meet sector reference points through the following key mechanisms:

- The design, development and approval of degree programmes with alignment to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), national credit frameworks and subject benchmark statements;
- The application of the University's Academic Regulations, Procedures and Processes which align to the FHEQ;
- The requirement for external engagement in programme approval processes, through the use of External Advisors and External Team members appointed from other institutions across the UK;
- Recruitment and induction of suitably qualified staff to deliver degree programmes and the ongoing professional development of these staff (including an institutional commitment to Fellowship, through Advance HE's UK Professional Standards Framework);
- The use of internal moderation processes (and double marking for dissertations of 40 credits and above);
- The use of External Examiners from other institutions who moderate assessment for the University's programmes, attend assessment boards and provide annual reports which provide assurance of, and commentary on, academic standards;
- The consideration through formal committees of annual reports on a range of key processes including student appeals, student complaints and academic malpractice.

3. Academic governance

Effective academic governance is essential in protecting the value of the University's qualifications over time. Academic Board, the most senior deliberative committee within the University, has responsibilities including academic standards, the validation and review of courses, policies and procedures for assessment and the content of the curriculum. Academic Board discharges these responsibilities through a range of sub-committees. Annual items considered through sub-committees include reports on External Examiner Reports, validation and student casework. Such reports cover all of the University's provision including that delivered through collaborative partners.

The University's Assessment Boards are responsible for ensuring that moderation processes have taken place and this, alongside formal reporting from External Examiners, provides assurance of marking standards wherever the University's programmes are delivered.

Academic Board reports to Academic Governance Committee, a sub-committee of the governing body; University Board. Academic Governance Committee (AGC) is responsible for providing assurance to University Board that the academic-related registration conditions of the Office for Students, including

those relating to quality and standards, continue to be met. AGC provides an Annual Report to University Board on this basis. Members of AGC and University Board have significant higher education leadership experience, ensuring that there is appropriate challenge of the University's outcomes and performance in relation to quality and standards.

This Degree Outcomes Statement 2023 has been considered and endorsed by Academic Governance Committee and University Board.

4. Classification algorithms

The University of Cumbria operates a single algorithm to calculate Honours Degree classifications as set out in the Academic Regulations. Module marks using percentages are used for award classification purposes with degree classification being based on the mean percentage mark. The pass mark for undergraduate modules is 40%.

Bachelor degrees are calculating using a weighted mean of 30% at (Level 5 – Year 2) and 70% at Level 6 – Year 3). In the case of top-up degrees where all the modules are at Level 6, the classification is based on the mean mark of the marks for all modules undertaken.

Percentage marks are ascribed to Bachelor degree classifications as follows:

Type of Classification	Lower final mark threshold	Upper final mark threshold
First Class	69.50%	100%
Upper Second Class	59.50%	69.49%
Lower Second Class	49.50%	59.49%
Third Class	39.50%	49.49%
Fail	0%	39.49%

Where the mean percentage mark is within 2% of the next higher classification band and at least 100 credits (or in the case of top up degrees 40 credits) are in the higher classification, the student will be awarded the higher classification. Pass/Fail modules are removed from the degree calculation.

Undergraduate students are allowed a reassessment for any module that they fail on the first attempt. Marks for the reassessment are capped at the pass mark. Students can exceptionally be allowed an uncapped reassessment in cases where extenuating circumstances have been submitted and approved. If students fail on reassessment, they have the opportunity to re-register to retake the module in its entirety, repeating the assessment and having another reassessment opportunity during the retake.

The University operates a system of compensation meaning that marginal failure in a module (a mark of between 35% and 39%) can be 'compensated', in that a pass is awarded for the module but the actual mark stands. Compensation can be applied in up to 40 credits of modules at Level 4, up to 20 credits at Level 5 and up to 20 credits at Level 6. The exception to this is modules which have been validated as 'core' meaning that compensation is not allowed; this normally applies to programmes governed by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) regulations.

The last permanent change to degree classifications was made for the academic year 2010/11 when the degree classification weighting between Levels 5 and 6 was changed from 40/60 to 30/70, it being felt that a greater weighting for Level 6 better reflected the level of achievement of students by the end of their degree. In academic year 2020/21, Emergency and Additional Regulations were applied in recognition of the impact of the Covid19 pandemic on students and their learning. The degree calculation provisions of the Emergency and Additional Regulations will continue to apply to a small number of continuing students in 2021/22 and 2022/23, applying to any students who were studying modules counting towards degree classification during the period of March-August 2020.

Students are directed to the University's Academic Regulations including degree classification algorithms through admissions and enrolment processes and the provision of Programme Handbooks and Module Guides. The Academic Regulations are available here.

5. Teaching practices and learning resources

The University is committed to continual improvement of teaching and learning practice and has a detailed Action Plan aligned to the University's Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2017-22. Key enhancements to benefit teaching practices and learning resources in recent years include:

➢ Employing good Curriculum Design and LTA practices to remove barriers to success for diverse student groups
➢ Implementation and embedding of the University's Curriculum Design Framework
➢ The development of new high quality teaching and learning spaces designed to support formal, informal and social learning
➢ Investment in online library and learning resources and learning tools and technologies to support the delivery of a high quality learning and teaching experience whether students are studying on campus, on blended or on distance/online learning programmes
➢ Close working with our partners to support students who study on validated and franchised programmes at our partner colleges, curating access to high quality open access library resources
➢ A focus on assessment literacy with a range of projects including the rollout of assessment rubrics designed to help students better understand assessment criteria, to provide transparency in how marks are allocated for work and to improve the quality of feedback on assessment

6. Identifying good practice and actions

External Examiners, in 2020/21, commended:

- The constructive and supportive feedback to students, showing how they can improve further (including good feedback for high achievers)
- Excellent examples of contextual and real-life focus on assessments to support future employment
- Varied, innovative and authentic assessment strategies
- Good use of assessment rubrics in many programmes
- Good use of virtual learning platforms

Additionally, the Emergency Regulations were seen as well-designed, ensuring fairness to students whilst at the same time maintaining robust outcomes and standards and upholding academic integrity.

The University is focussed on a number of key actions including:
- Employing good Curriculum Design and Learning, Teaching and Assessment practices to remove barriers to success for diverse student groups
- Addressing variations in attainment on different campuses or in different study modes through an informed and comprehensive appraisal of the structural and circumstantial contexts of the different groups
- The introduction and embedding of new roles of Student Engagement Co-ordinators based within Student Services, with the aim of supporting students with particular statuses and improving student engagement and retention at key 'risk' times e.g. intercalation.
- A continued focus through the University's Student Performance Group to source, interrogate and learn from a rich range of internal and external data to understand factors influencing and impacting on student outcomes, including degree outcomes

7. Challenges and areas for development

The University of Cumbria is committed to making Higher Education accessible to learners from a variety of backgrounds and to meeting the workforce needs of the regions of Cumbria and North Lancashire. We are a multi-site University with campuses in Carlisle, Lancaster, Ambleside and further sites in West Cumbria. We have a diverse portfolio with many professionally accredited programmes, including increasing numbers of apprentices studying for a University of Cumbria degree. We believe that every one of our students has the potential to achieve and are committed to providing students with the high quality teaching, learning opportunities and student support that will support their success both at University and beyond.

We have, within our Learning, Teaching and Assessment Action Plan, Student Success Strategy and Access and Participation Plan, identified a range of actions to improve the student experience, to address gaps in attainment and to support student success. The University's Access and Participation Plans take a "Whole Provider" approach to improving outcomes for students in underrepresented groups with the intention that most institutional effort is devoted to creating curricula, teaching, pastoral and social systems which are inclusive and equal by default and which see the measures of success at different stages of the student lifecycle as interconnected. There is a further focus on interventions for specific groups of students where a significant gap exists between their achievement and that of students in the majority group.

The University will continue to monitor the impact of the application of Emergency and Additional Regulations implemented as a result of the Covid19 pandemic.

Approved by Academic Governance Committee July 2023