

## University of Cumbria Degree Outcomes Statement 2024

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

| Academic Year | Total Headcount (Rounded) | First Class Honours | Upper Second Class Honours | First and Upper Second Combined | Lower Second Class Honours | Third Class Honours / Pass |
|---------------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2017/18       | 1425                      | 310                 | 650                        | 960                             | 345                        | 120                        |
| 2018/19       | 1510                      | 370                 | 595                        | 965                             | 405                        | 140                        |
| 2019/20       | 1565                      | 425                 | 655                        | 1080                            | 370                        | 115                        |
| 2020/21       | 1520                      | 475                 | 620                        | 1095                            | 290                        | 135                        |
| 2021/22       | 1485                      | 405                 | 595                        | 1000                            | 330                        | 155                        |
| 2022/23       | 1755                      | 490                 | 745                        | 1235                            | 435                        | 85                         |

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

| Academic Year | Total Headcount (Rounded) | First Class Honours | Upper Second Class Honours | First and Upper Second Combined | Lower Second Class Honours | Third Class Honours / Pass |
|---------------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2017/18       | 1425                      | 21.8%               | 45.6%                      | 67.4%                           | 24.2%                      | 8.4%                       |
| 2018/19       | 1510                      | 24.5%               | 39.4%                      | 63.9%                           | 26.8%                      | 9.3%                       |
| 2019/20       | 1565                      | 27.2%               | 41.9%                      | 69.0%                           | 23.6%                      | 7.3%                       |
| 2020/21       | 1520                      | 31.3%               | 40.8%                      | 72.0%                           | 19.1%                      | 8.9%                       |
| 2021/22       | 1485                      | 27.3%               | 40.1%                      | 67.3%                           | 22.2%                      | 10.4%                      |
| 2022/23       | 1755                      | 27.9%               | 42.5%                      | 70.4%                           | 24.8%                      | 4.8%                       |

The graduating class of 2022/23 show a return to pre-pandemic norms for attainment levels, with 70.4% achieving a First or Second Class Degree. The elevated rate of Third Class degrees seen last year has fallen back to below pre-pandemic levels in 2022/23, we believe this may be, in part, due to a renewed focus on achievement coinciding with the return to normal planned methods of delivery.

Full-time graduates completing in 2022/23 had their studies significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, studying through the lockdowns, hybrid learning, and restrictions on in-person activity that marked the calendar years 2020 and 2021. Part-time students were impacted in the same way, Covid having the most significant impact in the final stages of their course, which contribute more to overall degree classification.

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 Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnicities
- There is a small gap in the attainment of First and Upper Second class degrees for students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods
- There is a gap in the degree outcomes between students from backgrounds of socioeconomic disadvantage
- There is a small gap in attainment for students with a known disability (3.65% lower than those with no disability)

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 (APP) sets out the range of positive steps it is taking to close attainment gaps for students with particular characteristics, supported by Working Groups established to inform work on improving outcomes for students identified in the APP, these being:

- Care leaver and estranged students' success
- Black students' success
- Mature students' success
- Underrepresented students' success

## **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 operation, and ongoing review and development of, the University's Curriculum Design Framework
- 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 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 2024 has been considered and endorsed by Academic Governance Committee and approved by 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 calculated 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:

| <b>Type of Classification</b> | <b>Lower final mark threshold</b> | <b>Upper final mark threshold</b> |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 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.

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 continue to apply to an increasingly small number of continuing students in 2023/24 and beyond, applying only 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 as set out in our Academic Strategy. Enhancements to benefit teaching practices and learning resources in recent years include:

- Investment in online and digital library resources to improve the accessibility of resources for all students, whether studying on campus, blended or distance/online learning programmes (including apprenticeships)
- Investment in online learning tools and digital technologies and associated staff development to support the delivery of a high quality learning and teaching experience for all students
- Curating access to high quality open access library resources for use by our collaborative partners to support students who study on validated and franchised programmes

- Enhancement of student feedback processes to better understand and respond to student feedback
- The rollout of assessment brief templates and assessment rubrics designed to help students better understand assessment criteria and to provide transparency in how marks are allocated for work

## **6. Identifying good practice and actions**

External Examiners, in 2022/23, identified good practice in the following areas:

- The provision and accessibility of high quality online resources and materials
- High levels of student support
- The variety and range of assessments on programmes, with authentic assessment identified as good practice across a number of areas
- The quality of feedback provided to students to support their future learning
- The effectiveness and impact of mentoring arrangements for students on education placements

The University is focussed on a number of key actions including:

- Implementing the University's new Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plan, supported by staff development, with a focus on authentic assessment
- 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
- Enhancing student advice and support to proactively support our learners throughout their educational and personal journey with us
- Enhancing approach to student engagement and strengthening the student voice, including investment in a new online survey tool

## **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 significant 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 high quality teaching, learning opportunities and student support that will support their 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.

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