DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT 2024

The [UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment](#) (UKSCQA) expects Higher Education providers to periodically publish a Degree Outcomes Statement analysing their institutional undergraduate degree classification profile. The publication of a Degree Outcomes Statement is part of a sector-wide commitment to protecting the value and credibility of undergraduate Higher Education qualifications.

Prior to publication, this Degree Outcomes Statement is reviewed through the University's formal academic governance bodies and approved by the Council, following consideration by the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience. The University of Reading's Degree Outcomes Statement outlines the University's approach to marking and assessment, ensuring alignment with the guidance produced by the UKSCQA.

The data analysis below focuses on level 6 qualifications (Bachelor's degrees) and excludes integrated Master's degrees, Master's degrees, and non-classified awards.

Contents

1. INSTITUTIONAL DEGREE CLASSIFICATION PROFILE

The University's degree classification profile (Figure 1 and Table 1) sets out the percentage of degree classes awarded at the institutional level over the last six years for our Bachelor's degree (Level 6) programmes (2018/19 - 2023/24).
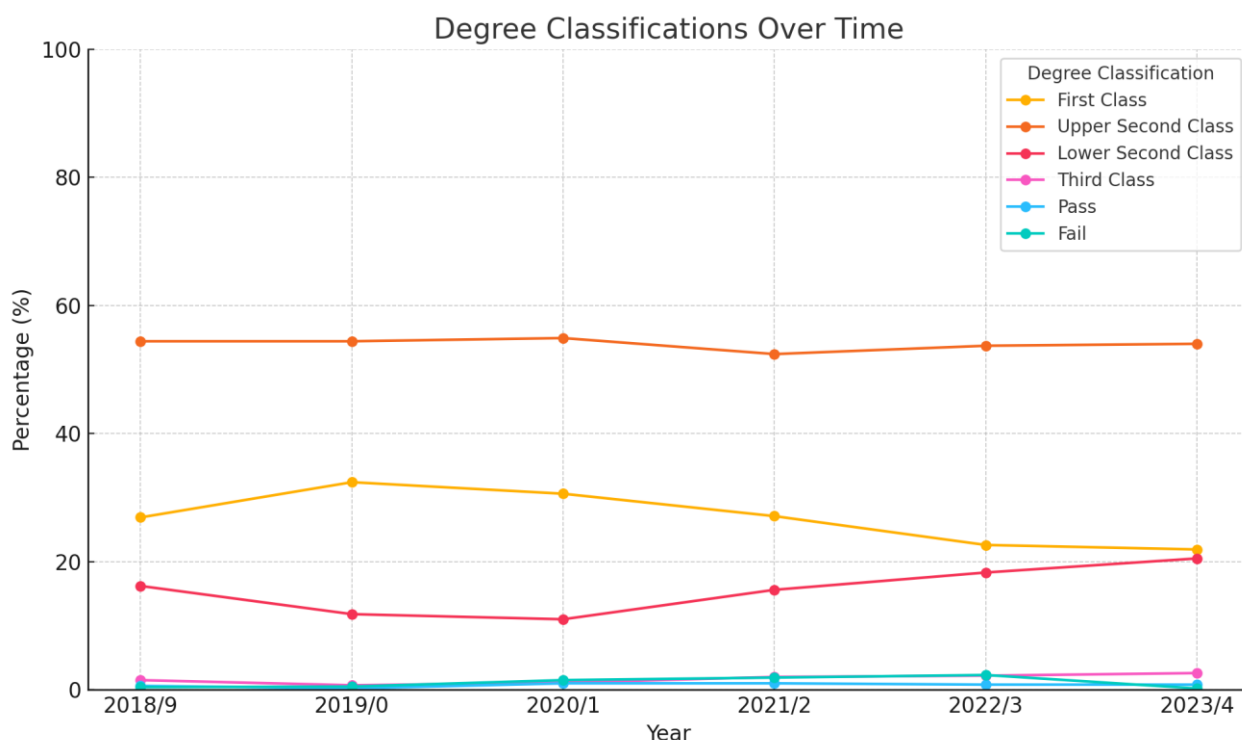

Figure 1: University of Reading Degree Classifications 2018/19 to 2023/24

Year	First Class	Upper Second Class	Lower Second Class	Third Class	Pass	Fail	1st + 2:1 (Good Honours)
2018/9	26.9	54.4	16.2	1.5	0.6	0.4	81.3
2019/0	32.4	54.4	11.8	0.7	0.2	0.5	86.8
2020/1	30.6	54.9	11	1.1	1	1.5	85.5
2021/2	27.1	52.4	15.6	2	1	1.9	79.5
2022/3	22.6	53.7	18.3	2.2	0.8	2.3	76.3
2023/4	21.9	54	20.5	2.6	0.8	0.2	75.9

Table 1: University of Reading Degree Classifications 2018-19 to 2023-24.

The degree outcomes data reflects the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the measures implemented by the University to mitigate its impact on students. The peak in Good Honours awards in 2019/20 (86.8%) and 2020/21 (85.5%) corresponds to the period when a package of measures was introduced, including greater flexibility for exceptional circumstances, weighting pre-pandemic assessments more heavily, and adopting online open-book exams and coursework-focused assessments. These measures were designed to ensure fairness and support for students navigating unprecedented challenges.

Importantly, academic standards were maintained during this period, as all students were required to demonstrate sufficient evidence of achievement at the level they were finally awarded. As the University transitioned back to pre-Covid practices from 2021/22 onwards, the Good Honours proportion declined to 75.9% in 2023/24, alongside an increase in Lower Second Class classifications, rising from 11.8% in 2019/20 to 20.5% in 2023/24. These shifts highlight the evolving assessment landscape during and after the pandemic, while underscoring the University's commitment to upholding academic standards throughout this period.

Comparison with the HE Sector

Using the most recently published HESA data (2022/23) for comparison against performance in the sector, the University's awards of First Class degrees continue to be slightly below the sector average (22.6% vs. 30%). This is balanced by a slightly higher proportion of Upper Second Class degrees (53.7% vs. 48%). The proportion of Lower Second Class degrees awarded (18.3%) is below the sector average (20%). The University also awards fewer Third Class/Pass degrees (2.2% vs. 3%).

Year	First Class	Upper Second Class	Lower Second Class	Third Class/Pass
2018/9	26.9 (28)	54.4 (48)	16.2 (19)	1.5 (4)
2019/0	32.4 (35)	54.4 (47)	11.8 (15)	0.7 (3)
2020/1	30.6 (36)	54.9 (46)	11 (14)	1.1 (3)
2021/2	27.1 (32)	52.4 (47)	15.6 (17)	2 (4)
2022/3	22.6 (30)	53.7 (48)	18.3 (20)	2.2 (3)

Table 2: Percentage of first degree qualifiers obtaining each classification. Reading (Sector)

University of Reading Data Insights

- **Subject Area**: There is some variation in the proportion of students achieving First or Upper Seconds within subject areas across this period, but little evidence of trends.

- **Disability Status**: Historically, there was no notable difference in the performance of disabled and non-disabled students. During 2020/21 and 2021/22, disabled students outperformed their peers by 5-6%, but this trend reversed in 2022/23, returning to pre-pandemic levels of parity.

- **Ethnicity**: A gap persists between BAME and White students achieving First or Upper Seconds. While the gap narrowed slightly during the pandemic, it has remained steady for the 2023/24 cohort.

- **Gender**: The gender gap remains consistent, with 79.6% of women and 71.6% of men achieving First or Upper Seconds in 2023/24, averaging an 8.2% difference across the period from 2018/19. Data for non-binary students is insufficient for analysis.

- **Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)**: The gap between the proportion of students from the most and least deprived neighbourhoods who achieve a First or Upper Second narrowed during the pandemic but reverted to pre-pandemic levels in 2021/22.

- **Neighbourhoods with Lower Participation in Higher Education (POLAR4)**: The gap between students from the neighbourhoods with the highest and lowest participation in higher education averaged 2% over the period 2018/19 to 2023/24 with a peak at 6% in 2020/21.

The University prioritises closing awarding gaps related to ethnicity, deprivation, and gender.

2. ASSESSMENT AND MARKING PRACTICES

Alignment with National Standards

The requirements for the University's awards and the learning outcomes of its programmes align with the regulatory sector-recognised standards for English degrees set by the Office for Students. The development of degree programmes also draws on the Quality Assurance Agency's Subject Benchmark Statements as a key reference point. Additionally, accredited degree programmes meet the requirements of their respective Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

Assessment Criteria and Moderation

Assessment criteria are designed to evaluate whether a student has achieved the relevant learning outcomes for an assessment and provide transparency in marking. These criteria are consistent across the University and supported by internal moderation, where a second marker reviews a sample of work to ensure consistency. Major assessments, such as dissertations, are often double-marked.

External Examiners

External Examiners, who are independent academics or practitioners, play a vital role in assuring the consistency and fairness of the University's assessment processes. They provide oversight of curricula, assessment design, marking standards, and award decisions. Their annual reports confirm alignment with national standards and inform continuous improvement.

Support for staff

The University supports academic staff in their marking and assessment practices through a range of professional development and training, including the academic practice programme for new lecturers. It also offers an induction session for its incoming External Examiners.

The University's policies and procedures for awards and assessment are set out in the Assessment Handbook.

Exceptional circumstances

Where a student's performance is affected by illness or other significant adverse circumstance, the University's Exceptional Circumstances Policy mitigates its impact on assessment through various measures, including extensions to deadlines and the opportunity to take an assessment at a later date.

Appeals

Students are able to appeal against their overall result in the Final or a Part Examination, their module mark, or an exceptional circumstances decision. An annual report on appeals is considered by the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience and a summary detailing findings is submitted to the Senate.

3. ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

The University's governance structure ensures robust oversight of academic standards. The Council, as the governing body, receives an Annual Learning and Teaching Report and is responsible for assuring the standards of the University's awards. The Senate oversees the direction of education and assessment, supported by the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (UBTLSE). Key governance functions include:

- **UBTLSE**: Monitors classification and progression rates and reviews External Examiners' reports.
- **University Programmes Board (UPB)**: Oversees programme approvals and amendments to ensure alignment with national standards.
- **External Scrutiny**: External panellists are appointed to key quality processes, ensuring independent oversight.

The University Awarding Board is responsible for recommending to Senate the award of degrees and other qualifications, and the University Progression Board is responsible for progression decisions.

Programmes delivered at our international branch campuses and those delivered in collaboration with a partner organisation are managed within the same governance framework as the rest of our provision.

Through these processes, the University ensures that it fulfils Office for Students requirements.

4. CLASSIFICATION ALGORITHM

The University's standard classification algorithm for Bachelor's degrees, together with variants for four-year Bachelor's degrees, is available in Appendix 3.

The standard classification is based on a weighted average of module marks for Parts 2 and 3 of the degree programme, with double weighting for Part 3 modules. Where a student's overall average falls within a 2% borderline below a classification boundary above the Pass threshold, the algorithm takes account of final-year performance and the profile of marks across Parts 2 and 3. An explanation of the elements in the classification rules and their rationale is available in Appendix 4.

The University allows students who have failed their Part or Final Examination to have one resit attempt at all modules which they have failed. Resit marks are capped at 40 for the purposes of classification.

The University-wide classification algorithm was first introduced in 2002/3 and was amended in 2006/7 with the effect of increasing its stringency. In 2020/21, the classification algorithm was again reviewed, in accordance with a recommendation agreed as part of the Degree Outcomes Statement 2020, and limited changes were introduced which have the effect of:

- Allowing finalists not qualifying for an Honours degree at first attempt the opportunity to resit for an Honours degree, subject to the capping of resit module marks (with effect for the final year cohort in 2021/22 and thereafter)
- Amending the criteria for Pass degree to the achievement of an overall weighted average within the range of 35-39.9 and 60 credits in the Final Part with marks of at least 40 (with effect for entrants from the 2022/23 academic session)

The changes detailed above will not have a material effect on the proportion of First and Upper Second class degrees awarded, but serve to align the University's practices in relation to the Pass threshold and Finalist resitters more closely to sector norms.

The stability of the classification algorithm helps to maintain the standard of the University's awards and to ensure their comparability over time. The University keeps it under review, and is confident that it is rigorous, fair and consistent with common practice in the higher education sector.

5. TEACHING PRACTICES AND LEARNING RESOURCES

The University of Reading's teaching practices are guided by a Curriculum Framework that ensures programmes are inclusive, research-informed, and progressively challenging. This Framework promotes innovation in teaching and assessment, with a focus on authentic assessment and constructive feedback practices that reflect the needs of individual disciplines. Initiatives such as the Electronic Management of Assessment (EMA) programme and the Focus on Feedback campaign have contributed to improvements in student engagement with assessment and feedback, which are key drivers of academic success and progression.

Investments in learning resources continue to play a significant role in supporting positive outcomes for students. The refurbishment of the University Library, enhancements to digital learning platforms such as Blackboard, and the introduction of Learning Capture technology have improved access to learning materials and flexibility in study, contributing to higher levels of student satisfaction and attainment. Subject-specific facilities, including specialised laboratories and unique collections such as the Cole Museum of Zoology, provide students with the resources needed to develop both technical and academic skills.

Programmes are also designed to integrate research-informed teaching and real-world learning opportunities, which contribute to the development of graduate attributes that are reflected in degree outcomes. Initiatives such as the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme (UROP), fieldwork, placements, and real-world projects help students achieve deeper levels of engagement and academic performance.

The University has also enhanced student support systems, including the Academic Tutor System and the Life Tools programme, which provide tailored guidance to students throughout their studies. These support mechanisms are important in enabling students to overcome challenges and achieve successful academic outcomes, as evidenced by sustained levels of Good Honours awards across programmes.

6. IDENTIFYING GOOD PRACTICE AND ACTIONS

The University's assessment and classification processes are rigorous, fair, and make effective use of External Examiners. As part of our quality assurance and enhancement efforts, we conduct an annual thematic review of External Examiner reports to highlight good practice for wider dissemination and identify common issues requiring attention.

In 2022/23, External Examiners commended several areas, including:

- The ambition, intellectual independence, and technical proficiency demonstrated in student dissertations.
- Good practices in groupwork, the variety of assessment types, and high-quality feedback.
- Students' warm appreciation for staff who provided exceptional academic and personal support.

The University has revised its periodic review of programmes, introducing the PEER process, which emphasises enhancement and alignment with the requirements of the Office for Students.

During 2023/24, the University has extensively explored the opportunities presented by generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, for enhancing the student academic experience while safeguarding academic standards. Comprehensive guidance for staff and students has been developed, and the security of varied assessment methods is being actively monitored to ensure they accurately measure student achievement against programme learning outcomes.

Above all, the University is committed to enabling all students to achieve successful outcomes, both in their academic performance and progression to graduate-level employment. Data is continuously analysed to identify disparities in outcomes across student groups, and targeted actions and interventions are implemented to address these where appropriate.

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