

Loughborough University Degree Outcomes Statement, 2021/22

In May 2019, the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) published a Statement of Intent. It proposed that providers should publish a degree outcomes statement analysing their institutional degree classification profile and articulating the results of an internal institutional review. This review should help assure providers that they meet the Expectations of the Quality Code for Higher Education that relate to protecting the value of qualifications and, for providers in England, the Office for Students' ongoing conditions of registration on academic standards (B4 and B5).

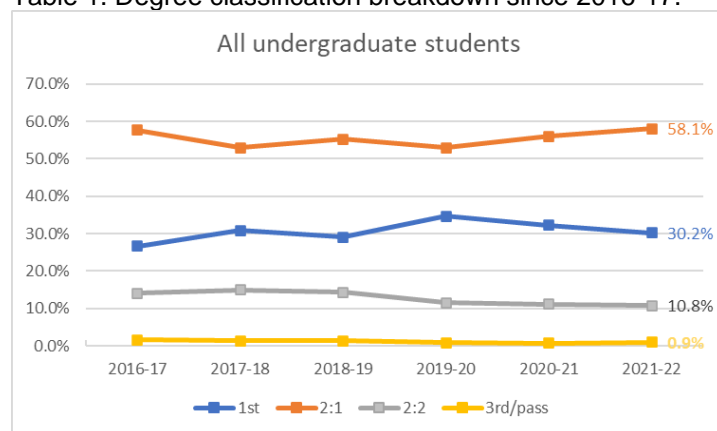
1. Institutional degree classification profile

1.1. Overall trends

The trends for degree classifications at Loughborough University are presented below. Over the last 6 years:

- The percentage of students awarded a first-class degree increased slightly by 3.6 percentage points from 26.6% in 2016/17 to 30.2% in 2021/22. Sector data shows a sector increase of 10% from 26% to 36% from 2016/17 to 2020/21 (2021/22 sector data have not yet been published) ¹.
- The percentage of students awarded an upper second degree in 2021/22 (58.1%) is slightly higher than in 2016/17 (57.7%). There have been some slight fluctuations during the period. Sector data show a decrease of 3 percentage points from 49% to 46% from 2016/17 to 2020/21 (2021/22 sector data has not yet been published). ¹

Table 1. Degree classification breakdown since 2016-17.



¹ HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) release February 2022
<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/outcomes#classifications>

1.2. Entry qualifications

The average entry tariff (linked to A level grades and other entry qualifications) for the students that graduated over the most recent 6-year period remained stable, being 161.8 points in 2016/17 and 161.5 points in 2021/22. It is difficult to draw conclusions about the impact of entry tariff points on degree classification as both the way in which tariff points were calculated and our internal data collection methods have changed during this period. As both our degree classification and entry tariff trends are relatively flat over the 5-year period, we do not observe any particular link between the rate of award of first and upper second degrees and entry tariff.

1.3. Graduate characteristics

The percentage of students that graduated in the last 6 years with a first degree at grade 2:1 or above by gender, ethnicity and IMD quintile are shown in the table below. For the gaps, the comparison category is shown in bold. The ethnicity and IMD attainment gaps are described in more detail in, and are being addressed via, our Access and Participation Plan:

<https://apis.officeforstudents.org.uk/accessplansdownloads/2024/LoughboroughUniversity APP 2020-21 V1 10004113.pdf>

Table 2. Degree classifications at first or upper second by Ethnicity and Gender characteristics.

Characteristic	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	
	1st/2:1 %	1st/2:1 %	1st/2:1 %	1st/2:1 %	1st/2:1 %	1st/2:1 %	gap	gap	gap	gap	gap	gap	
Ethnicity	White	88%	89%	88%	92%	92%	92%						
	Asian	79%	77%	76%	84%	86%	87%	-9%	-12%	-11%	-8%	-6%	-5%
	Black	76%	64%	78%	77%	76%	79%	-12%	-25%	-9%	-15%	-15%	-13%
Gender	Females	90%	91%	91%	92%	94%	94%						
	Males	83%	82%	82%	87%	86%	88%	-7%	-10%	-10%	-5%	-9%	-5%
IMD Quintile	Q345	87%	88%	87%	90%	91%	91%						
	Q12	81%	77%	79%	85%	85%	84%	-6%	-11%	-8%	-5%	-6%	-7%

2. Assessment and marking practices

The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) is an important reference point for all Loughborough University awards. Our assessment processes, as outlined in our Academic Quality Procedures Handbook, detail how we use both internal and external expertise to ensure that assessment criteria meet sector reference points. This ensures we meet the threshold standards for Level 6 FHEQ/Level 10 FQHEIS degrees, and ensures that there is consistency in marking, appeals and the treatment of mitigating circumstances which may have affected a students' academic performance.

All assessment methods and criteria are aligned to learning outcomes and teaching activities, all of which are developed in accordance with the academic level of study and module credit weightings, using appropriate descriptors and consistent language that are understood by all students and staff involved in the assessment process. They reflect course and module aims as well as other factors where appropriate, such as professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements. The UK Professional Standards Framework for Higher Education is a reference point for professional practice and development in respect of assessment.

We assure ourselves that these activities are effective through our academic governance arrangements (see section 3).

The University recognises the fundamental importance of External Examining to maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing academic quality. Accordingly, External Examiners are appointed to all provision that leads to a Loughborough University award.

The purposes of the External Examiner system are to ensure that the standards set for taught programmes awarded in similar subjects are appropriate for the awards, or award elements, by reference to national subject benchmarks, the FHEQ, programme specifications and other relevant information and are comparable in standard in all Universities in the UK. They are also appointed to ensure that the assessment system is fair and is fairly operated in the classification of students.

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a significant impact on teaching, learning and assessment, with periods of campus closure and online delivery and assessment. In 2019/20 and 2020/21 we committed to our students that we would apply the Loughborough Undergraduate Safety Net to ensure that during the pandemic they were not disadvantaged in respect of their degree outcomes and to ensure that everyone was treated fairly given the changes to teaching, learning and assessment. Our priorities have been two-fold. First, to ensure students can meet the learning outcomes of their programmes and either progress to the next year of their studies, or for finalists to graduate. Second, to maintain standards so that our qualifications are a true reflection of student ability and continue to be recognised by employers and others for their academic credibility and value.

3. Academic governance

Our internal governance structures ensure rigorous strategic and operational oversight of the quality of delivery and the standards by which we assess our provision. As detailed on our Academic Quality Procedures Handbook, this includes clearly defined procedures for monitoring and reporting on quality and standards through the University committee structure, culminating annually with an assurance report to Council, the highest body at the University, about the rigour of activities relating to the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and student outcomes. This enables Council to make a judgement on whether the University has appropriately set and maintained the standards of awards for which it is responsible.

Amongst other things, Council receives assurance that thorough scrutiny of all taught programmes, including those delivered by the one partner for whom we validate awards, takes place through our internal Annual Programme Review process, and as part of a wider extensive review of academic School activity by Learning and Teaching Committee. The views of External Examiners, PSRBs, companies providing industrial training placements and employers of the University's graduates, as well as the views of students and staff, are all taken into account. We are transparent with our data and degree classifications are included in our Key Performance Indicators. These are monitored regularly through our committee structure, and through discussions with the senior academic leadership in our academic Schools, and reported to Council.

We have consulted with staff and student representatives, and representatives from the partner for whom we validate awards, in the process of assuring the content of this degree outcomes statement.

4. Classification algorithms

The process for determining a degree classification is set out in Regulation XX: Undergraduate Awards and supplemented with information in Programme Specifications. These are publicly available to students and all relevant stakeholders.

Degrees are awarded following the successful accumulation of credit. In order to gain credit in an undergraduate module, a student must achieve a module mark of at least 40%. Students registered for Bachelors' awards need to accumulate at least 100 credits to pass each year and qualify for an Honours degree, while students registered for Integrated Masters awards need to accumulate 120 credits and an overall average mark for the year of 55% to pass each year. In line with the sector, students normally have one opportunity to resit a failed module with the module mark capped at the threshold pass mark of 40%. Where a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body has additional requirements, this is detailed in the relevant Programme Specification.

A student's degree classification is calculated as follows:

- For each year of the programme (with the exception of first year marks, which do not count towards the final degree classification), the Module Mark awarded for every module is weighted in proportion to the credits attached to the module and used to calculate an average mark for that year.
- The average marks for all years are combined in a ratio specified in the relevant Programme Specification to determine the Programme Mark.
- The Programme Mark is translated into a Degree Classification according to a table set out in Regulation XX: Undergraduate Awards.
- The Degree Classification is awarded by a Programme Board, which has the discretion to lower the threshold for awarding a Classification.

We keep this methodology under review on a four-year cycle to provide regular assurance of the maintenance of standards and transparency in the classification process for all stakeholders.

In 2020/21 the University approved tightening of discretion at the borderline (now using 2% rather than 3%) to bring the University degree classification mechanisms in line with the majority of the sector. In practice, this has made little impact on the degree results because exam boards had not been using the full discretion of 3% at the boundary, with most movements being less than 2%.

5. Teaching practices and learning resources

Loughborough University continually evaluates, revises and invests in teaching practices and learning resources in order to provide an academic experience of high quality and standard. Our teaching excellence is recognised through internal awards, such as our Teaching Innovation Awards and Research-Informed Teaching Awards. It is also recognised through Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), which all new academic staff are required to achieve as part of their probation requirements, and the recognition of many staff as Senior and Principal Fellows of the HEA.

Our investment and physical and digital learning resources is significant and externally recognised. We were rated the top University in the 'high quality facilities' measure in the 2018 THE Student Experience Survey and we were ranked 3rd for 'learning resources' in the 2021 National Student Survey. The University's STEMLab was an award winner at the 2019 S-Lab Awards for Excellence in Laboratory Design,

Management and Operation. As well as being named 'University of the Year', the University was announced as the winner of the 'University Facilities' category at the 2020 WhatUni Student Choice Awards.

Noting that our degree classification trends are relatively flat over the 6-year period, we are satisfied that these enhancements to teaching practices and learning resources have served to provide the highest quality of education experience for our students without prejudicing our degree classifications profile.

6. Identifying good practice and actions

The University reviews its classification mechanisms on a four-year cycle, taking into consideration feedback from External Examiners, PSRBs, academic and non-academic staff and student representatives. We consider this to be good practice as it provides regular assurance of the maintenance of standards and transparency in the classification process for all stakeholders.

Teaching Awards provide an important means for the University to recognise, celebrate and promote excellence in learning and teaching. Currently, there are three types of award, one encouraging new developments for the future (Teaching Innovation Awards), the other recognising current teaching excellence (Research-informed Teaching Award) and a new award created in 2020 to share examples of best practice (Teaching Best Practice Award). Academic Schools also award School Teaching Awards voted for by students, and the University actively supports Loughborough Students' Union in the joint annual student-led Loughborough Academic Awards for staff.

7. Risks and challenges.

Through our regular cycle of evaluation and review of provision, taking into account internal and external viewpoints, the University monitors risks and challenges, taking action should the need arise.

Approved by University Council, 23 November 2022.