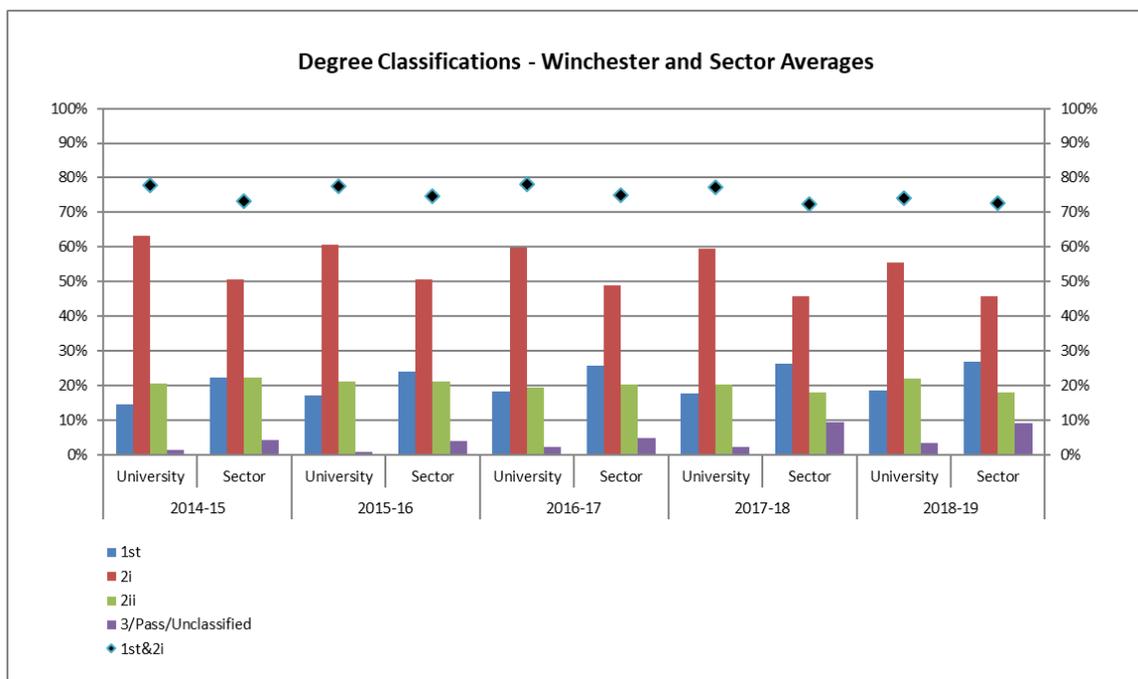


University of Winchester Degree Outcomes Statement July 2020

A Degree Differentials Task and Finish group was established during 2017 to consider the University's grade profile and classification algorithm.

1. Institutional Degree Classification Profile

- a) The proportion of good degrees (first and upper second) awarded by the University of Winchester is consistently above sector average. The year on year variation with the sector is small.



- b) Whilst the number of good degrees is above sector average there is considerable variation within any one graduating year; most noticeably there are variations associated with subject area and with student personal characteristics.

1.1. Subject differences

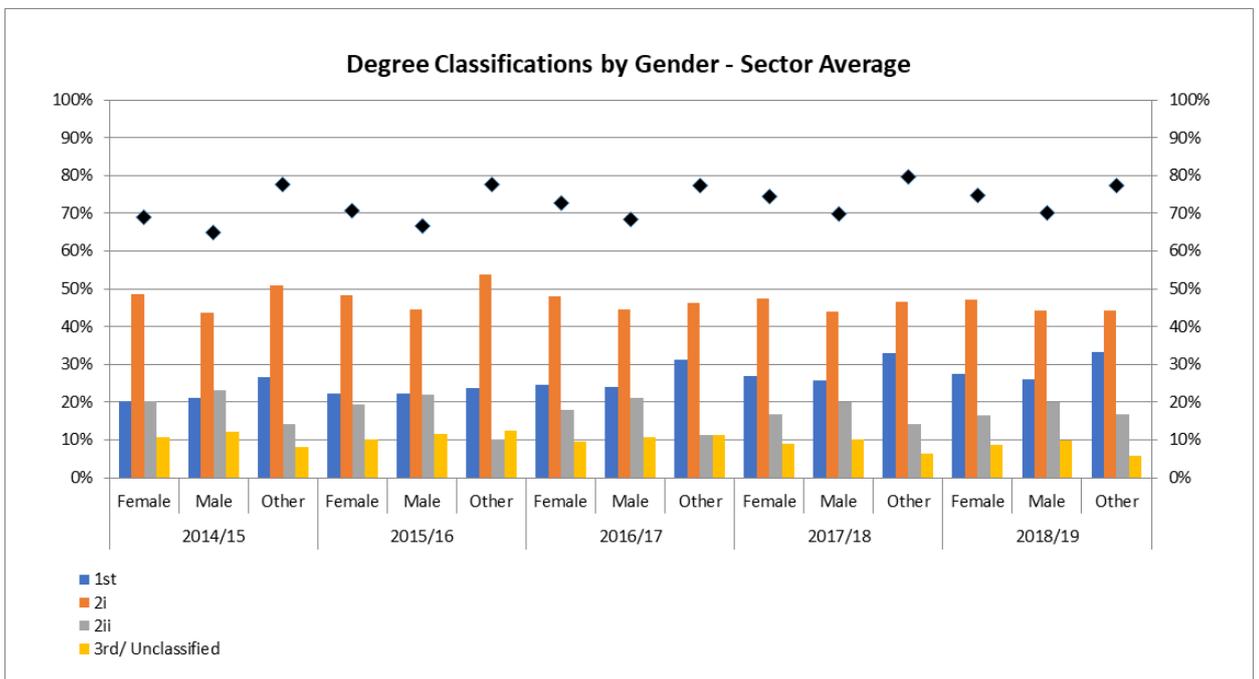
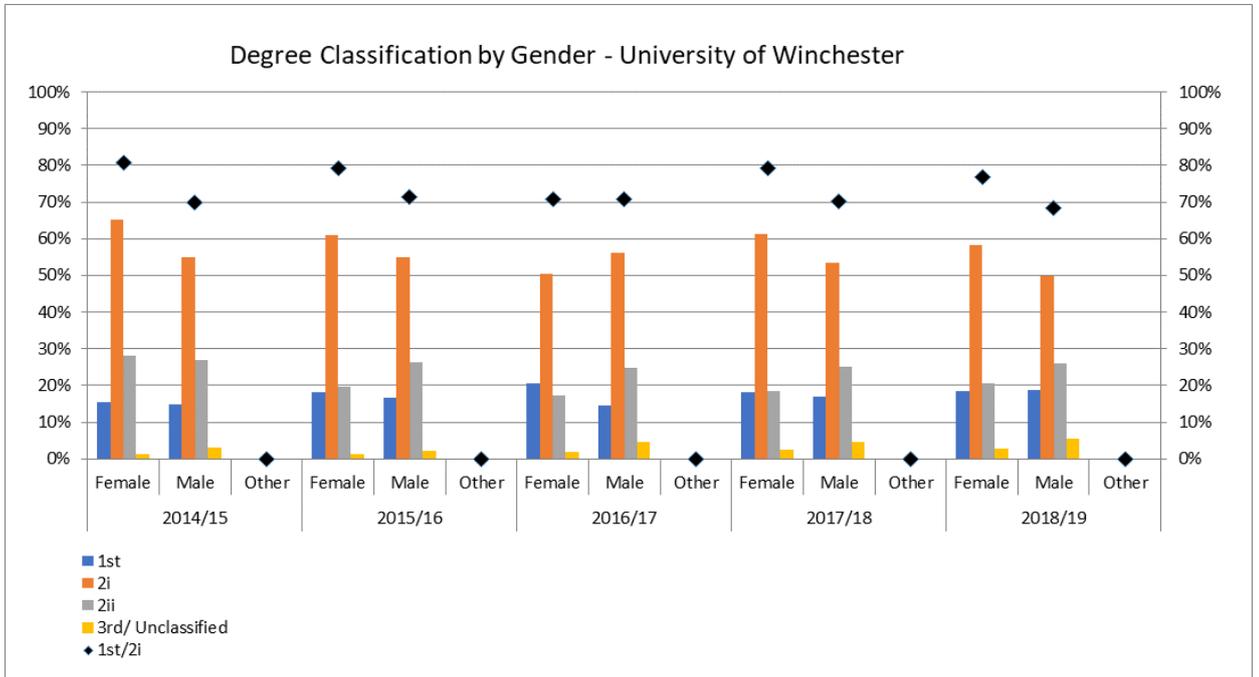
- a) Where subject cohorts are large enough to enable comparison, the distribution of awards at a principal Joint Academic Coding of Subjects level is broadly similar to the sector.
- b) However, some University subject disciplines are seen to consistently award a slightly higher proportion of good degrees than sector in the same subject area (+10-15%). Other University subject areas award proportions below sector average in the corresponding subject areas (from -10-15%).

1.2. Entry tariff

- a) We regularly review distributions of outcome against entry tariff but there appears to be no clear correlation. We suspect the pattern is a complex one resulting from the influence of both subject discipline and personal student characteristics. We will be undertaking further work to try to reveal the interplay of these factors.

1.3. Gender

- a) Female students commonly obtain a higher proportion of good degrees than do males. These outcomes mirror those shown across the sector. Numbers of other gender students do not meet accepted Sector publication thresholds and therefore results are withheld to ensure that no individuals can be identified in the data.



1.4. Mature students

- a) From 2016-2018 mature full-time first-degree students were more likely to attain a first or upper second than their younger peers, with 81% of students aged 21 and over achieving a first or upper second in 2016/17 compared to 77% (a 4-percentage point gap) narrowing to a 2-percentage point gap in 2017/18.

- b) Most recent data suggest this gap has closed with 75% of both young and mature students achieving a first or upper second.

1.5. Students from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Backgrounds

- a) In 2018-19, 60% of our BAME students attained a first or upper second compared to 76.6% of their white peers, a 17-percentage point gap (national gap of 13.7).
- b) Only 54% our UK Black students attained a first or upper second in 2018/19 (a gap of 30 percentage points compared to a gap of 22-percentage points nationally).
- c) We continue to prioritise this group in our wider work, including through targeted initiatives based on the Alterline research into Black Students experience, and via inclusive (decolonising the) curriculum enhancements including revised reading lists and guest lecturers. Evidence of the impact of income-based bursaries on student success has supported moves to ensure, as of 2020/21, financial support will be targeted exclusively at BAME students and those from low-participation neighbourhoods.
- d) Following a number of targeted initiatives and focus groups into the student experience of our UK Asian students we have seen the attainment gap drop from 34 percentage points in 2016/17 to a 9-percentage point gap in 2018/19 (falling below the sector gap of 11.5).

1.6. Students from low-participation neighbourhoods

- a) In 2014/15 students from neighbourhoods with the lowest participation rates in higher education were as likely to receive a first or upper second as those from neighbourhoods with the highest participation rates into higher education.
- b) From 2015 to 2017, attainment rates for these students dropped to 69%, creating a 10-percentage point gap.
- c) A series of targeted peer-support activity, including embedding the 'changing mindsets' approach that aims to build a growth mind-set (the belief that intelligence is not fixed and can be increased through effort), across peer-assisted learning, alongside developments in assessment and feedback practices has helped to challenge self-limiting beliefs and imposter syndrome across these groups.
- d) In the last two years the attainment gap decreased to a 6-percentage points gap, below the sector gap of 9.6 percentage points.

1.7. Students from the most deprived backgrounds

- a) The proportion of students achieving a first or upper second from the most deprived neighbourhoods in England (Index of Multiple Deprivation Q1) dropped from 76 % in 2014/15 to 63% in 2017/18, resulting in an attainment gap between the most and least deprived students of 18 percentage points (IMD Q1:Q5).
- b) A series of targeted peer-support activity, including embedding the 'changing mindsets' approach across peer-assisted learning, alongside developments in assessment and feedback practices (as outlined in section 2) has helped to challenge self-limiting beliefs and imposter syndrome across these groups.

- c) We have seen some progress in closing the attainment gap and in 2018/19, 66% of the most disadvantaged students achieved a first or upper second (an 11-percentage point gap).

1.8. Disabled students

- a) In 2019, 71% of our disabled students achieved a 1st or 2:1 compared to 76% of their non-disabled peers, a gap of 5 percentage points. This has remained a relatively stable gap over the past 5-years.
- b) We have, however, seen a widening attainment gap for students with a mental health difficulty and have focussed a number of initiatives on this cohort of students including targeted peer support (e.g. peer assisted learning) on programmes with larger cohorts of students reporting a mental health difficulty, faculty wellbeing tutors and mental health apps. Next year, we intend to utilise learner analytics to further identify the impact of student engagement for disabled students on student outcomes to inform future activity.

2. Assessment and Marking Practices

- a) New Assessment Criteria were introduced following a recommendation from the Degree Differentials Task and Finish Group (see section 4 below). These clearly reference FHEQ standards at all levels up to and including Level 6 allowing programmes to map the assessment criteria directly to the relevant learning outcomes. The Level and Module learning outcomes are considered as part of the (re)validation process.
- b) Marking and moderation processes are described in the Assessment Regulations. Internal moderation is a process separate from that of marking and provides assurance that assessment criteria have been applied appropriately.
- c) We run calibration workshops designed to enable marking teams to consider how they are approaching students' assessment and to ensure that there aren't any factors which impact on fairness and consistency of approach.
- d) External moderation is achieved via scrutiny by external examiners of assessments, marking criteria and processes and Exam Board processes. External examiners are asked to confirm that the University's programmes maintain the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the FHEQ and applicable benchmark statements and also that the academic standards and achievements of students are comparable with those in other Higher Education Institutions of which the external examiners have experience.
- e) External examiner appointments must meet a range of criteria including subject expertise and assurances regarding conflicts of interest. In the rare cases where provision at a partner is not delivered in English, a UK based external examiner is appointed who is able to speak the language required and who is thus able to assure academic standards.
- f) The University complies with all its PSRB reporting requirements. Where required there is PSRB representation on validation panels. Each validation and re-validation panel includes both an Academic and a 'Professional' external panel member. The Professional is selected from a relevant sector to give a perspective on the employability and skills aspects of the curriculum and assessment.
- g) Regulations and Policies for Academic Appeals and Extenuating Circumstances both have set procedures for students to follow to request consideration of an appeal against the

outcome of the Progression and Award Board or to request consideration of circumstances that have impacted on their studies.

- h) Appeals are managed by the central Quality Office thus ensuring consistency of approach and decision making. An annual report of the number and types of appeal is considered by Senate.
- i) The Extenuating Circumstances procedure has been reviewed during 2019/20 and a revised process is due to be implemented in 2020/21. The revised process introduces an Extenuating Circumstances Panel at Faculty level to ensure consistency and parity of decision making across each Faculty.

3. Academic Governance

- a) Senate is responsible for 'exercising the power to award degrees and other awards to persons who complete an appropriate programme of study and satisfy an appropriate assessment as determined by Senate'. Authority is delegated to Progression and Award Boards which operate according to published regulations, procedures and guidelines.
- b) In 2019 the University piloted new single tier Department Progression and Awards Boards followed by a University Exam Board. The pilot was successful and it was agreed to introduce single tier Progression and Award Boards for all Faculties in 2020.¹
- c) Collaborative partnerships operate within standard University governance. Marks from collaborative partners are scrutinised at a University of Winchester Progression and Award Board. The University's Assessment Regulations and Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes also apply to collaborative provision as do the University's external examiners of Taught Programmes - Policy and Procedures.
- d) External examiners are asked to confirm that internal marking 'is (in accordance with the University's policies and regulations) impartial, fair and consistent?'
- e) Senate Academic Development Committee receives a summary of external examiner reports each year and an action plan arising out of feedback from external examiner reports including reports from external examiners at collaborative partners.
- f) Programme Leaders comment on trends in final awards in their Annual Programme Evaluation templates.
- g) The completion of this Degree Outcomes Statement has involved external assistance as recommended by the Statement of Intent. The statement has been considered and approved by the University's Senate and Board of Governors.

4. Classification Algorithms

- a) Our undergraduate algorithm is detailed below and can be accessed in the University's Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes.
- b) The calculation for Honours classification for a three or four-year Bachelor programme is normally determined as follows:
 - i. An Extended Independent Study module shall contribute: 20%
 - ii. An average of the best 60 credits at level 6 shall contribute: 40%

¹ As a result of the Covid 19 pandemic the University moved to weekly University Progression and Award Boards between June and September 2020.

- iii. An average of the best remaining 120 credits at levels 5/6 shall contribute: 40%
- c) The calculation for Honours classification for a three or four year programme without an Extended Independent Study module is normally determined as follows:
 - i. An average of the best 90 credits at level 6 shall contribute: 60%
 - ii. An average of the best remaining 120 credits at levels 5/6 shall contribute: 40%
- d) The algorithm emphasizes exit velocity by weighting the final level of the degree more highly and promotes the importance of the Extended Independent Study Module where this exists. It also permits students to mitigate for poor performance in some modules whilst the exclusion of level 4 from the degree classification algorithm enables students to transition effectively into university study.
- e) Programme teams signpost students to the regulations which contain the classification algorithm.
- f) Students are normally permitted automatic second attempts for all failed first attempts which are normally capped at the minimum pass mark. In exceptional circumstances a third attempt may be permitted.
- g) A Degree Differentials Task and Finish group met four times during 2017 and 2018 to consider the University's grade profile and classification algorithm. Discussions also took place at Academic Regulations Policies and Procedures Committee and Senate Academic Development Committee. The Board of Governors receives a report on degree outcomes each year.
- h) The task and finish group considered the impact of the current regulations on degree classifications and modelled a number of different approaches. The group recommended the removal of the upgrade rule² which was shown to result in inflation of the number of firsts and upper seconds awarded. The upgrade rule was removed for cohorts starting in September 2018 and for subsequent cohorts. The impact of this decision will be measurable in award data for the 2021 graduating cohort.

5. Teaching Practices and Learning Resources

- a) We introduced a new Assessment Strategy in August 2018 intended to enhance and streamline the ways we assess our students' learning. The strategy introduced, amongst other things, focus on clarity of learning outcomes (by setting an upper limit of six per level and four per module), the explicit correspondence of each set of module learning outcomes to a parallel set of assessment criteria on which that module's work will be assessed and a dramatic reduction in the volume of summative assessment.
- b) Recognising the connection between degree outcomes and the number of timed examinations we introduced a requirement that all students must experience a timed assessment in each level of study. We have also introduced anonymous marking. We are implementing an evaluation of the impact of the Assessment strategy with staff and students which is due to report during academic year 2020/21

² Bachelor degree students, whose overall mark falls within 2% of the borderline for a higher honours classification and who have achieved a mark equivalent to the higher classification in at least 60 credits at level 6, shall have their degree classification upgraded. Integrated Master's degree students, whose overall mark falls within 2% of the borderline for a higher honours classification and who have achieved a mark equivalent to the higher classification in at least 60 credits at level 7, shall have their degree classification upgraded.

- c) Assessment is also a key focus of every programme revalidation through inclusion of a mandatory 'Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment' (TESTA)³ workshop. TESTA focuses on investigating programme assessment patterns to enhance assessment and feedback design and improve the student learning experience.
- d) Academic Quality and Development also offers regular CPD sessions for faculties and in 2018, 16 out of 18 departments had a full day of CPD sessions of their choosing. These included sessions on moderation, assessment criteria and grade inflation.
- e) We have a sustained commitment to increasing the number of staff with HEA fellowship and based on current staffing, we have increased this from 56% in 2015-16 to 73% by March 2019.
- f) We have upgraded our Learning Management System to Canvas, which fulfils the W3C principles of digital accessibility and incorporates an immersive reader, keyboard navigation and an accessibility checker. We have purchased a 24/7 helpdesk service to support all users. We have also introduced evidence based and “patron-driven” models allowing students direct impact on the development of the Library collection.
- g) We have increased our mental wellbeing support over the last 5 years. It is acknowledged that good mental wellbeing supports the attainment of good academic outcomes. Thus, developing skills and confidence in mental wellbeing should result in positive degree outcomes for students.

6. Identifying Good Practice and Actions

- a) We list below a number of examples of good practice relating to classification at the University
 - i. Annual reports to the Board of Governors about trends in degree classification
 - ii. The formation and work of the Degree Differentials Task and Finish Group
 - iii. Assessment calibration workshops
 - iv. A new University assessment criteria framework which clearly references the FHEQ
 - v. Removal of the upgrade rule
 - vi. New Assessment Strategy (2018), in particular, the streamlining of the volume of assessment and learning outcomes and the explicit alignment of learning outcomes and assessment criteria
 - vii. TESTA workshops
 - viii. Consideration of trends in final awards in Annual Programme Evaluations
 - ix. Praise from external examiners about the robustness of the assessment and moderation processes across the University and the conduct of examination boards.

7. Risks and Challenges

- a) Developments in the University's portfolio of professional degree programmes such as Nursing and Physiotherapy have required a review of the approach to the degree algorithm. To date the University has maintained a single (two variant) algorithm for all undergraduate programmes but the introduction of programmes with significant volumes of Pass/Fail credit will require the development of new, programme specific algorithms.

³ <https://www.testa.ac.uk/>

- b) The University will assess the impact of removing the upgrade rule on its overall grade profile and will work to assess the impact of its teaching and learning enhancement initiatives on student attainment.
- c) The University will continue to strive to reduce attainment gaps where these exist.
- d) This Degree Outcomes Statement and its underpinning data will be reviewed on an annual basis by Senate and the Board of Governors.