**CARDIFF UNIVERSITY DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT 2024**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Universities in England and Wales publish a Degree Outcomes Statement, as specified by the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) [Statement of Intent](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/degree-classification-soi.pdf), to protect the value of UK degrees and to demonstrate how academic standards are monitored and reviewed.

Cardiff University published its first Degree Outcomes Statement in 2020 and this is the second Statement which was updated in 2024.

The Degree Outcomes Statement provides an overview of the University’s degree classification profile. Student outcomes are critically reviewed annually through the University’s academic quality system, ensuring that academic standards are appropriately set and maintained with reference to external expectations. The Statement also provides details of assessment practices, governance arrangements, and future actions to protect the academic standards of awards and to enhance learning and assessment to ensure that students can achieve their potential.

### **2 DEGREE CLASSIFICATION PROFILE**

2.1 University Degree Outcomes Profile

The University’s degree outcomes profile is presented in the below graph. The graph includes degree classification data for undergraduate students achieving classified degrees at Level 6 (Bachelor) and Level 7 (Integrated Master) as defined by the Framework of Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).

The increase in the proportion of 1st class degrees in 2019/20 and 2020/21 is attributed to the use of a Safety Net (analysis shows the provisions of the safety net contributed c3 percentage points in 2020/21). The Safety Net was approved for use in 2019/20 to ensure that students were not disadvantaged by the disruption resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. The degree outcomes profile following the removal of the safety net has broadly reverted to the pre-pandemic.

The data for academic schools indicate that there is variability between schools in the proportion of students achieving 1st class degrees. These variations are typical of the differences which exist for nationally-defined subject categories in the higher education sector data.

The degree outcomes data for the University and its schools and subjects are reviewed annually and outcomes of the review considered by University committees. The review seeks to understand the underlying reasons for the degree outcomes profile and to identify how we can better support students to achieve their potential.

### **2.2 Sector Comparison**

A comparison of the University profile against the sector and sector groups shows that similar to the University, there was an increase in the proportion of 1st class and good honours degrees across the sector during the pandemic. Universities UK has attributed the increase in the proportion of 1st class degrees to the use of no detriment (safety net) policies.

As shown in the below graphs, the increase in the proportion of 1st class degrees at the University was more modest than for the UK sector which provides an assurance that the safety net adopted by the University did not result in inflated outcomes relative to the sector. The data suggests that the University’s degree outcomes profile has reverted to the pre-pandemic more quickly than the UK sector.

Sector data taken from HESA: ‘Percentage of first degree qualifiers obtaining each classification, Figure 16’ and ‘HE qualifiers by HE provider and level of qualification obtained, Table 16’.

### **2.3 Student Characteristics Profile**

The University reviews 1st class degrees and good degrees (1st class and 2:1) awarded by the University to undergraduate students differentiated by selected demographic groups. The purpose is to identify whether there are awarding gaps and to understand the underlying reasons for the degree outcomes profile.

#### **Ethnicity**

The University aims to eradicate the Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic awarding gap. Consequently, we report on the Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic awarding gap annually i.e. the percentage point difference between outcomes for UK white students and UK Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic students for those achieving good degrees (1st and 2-1):

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2018/19** | **2019/20** | **2020/21** | **2021/22** | **2022/23** |
| Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic Awarding Gap | -12 | -7 | -10 | -11 | -7 |

When undertaking an analysis to better understand the degree outcomes profile it is more relevant and more appropriate to present data of more granular ethnicity data for degree outcomes, rather than aggregating the ethnicity data into one category of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic.

There are notable differences in the proportion of UK students being awarded 1st class degrees and good honours degrees depending on ethnicity. The proportion of UK white students being awarded 1st class degrees is consistently higher than UK students from other ethnic groups, and usually higher for good honours degrees. The gap for Asian students being awarded a good honours degree has narrowed, however, the gap for Black students has generally persisted over the past 5 years.

#### **Gender**

The proportion of female students being awarded 1st class degrees and good honours degrees is consistently higher than male students.

#### **Disability**

There is little difference in the proportion of students being awarded 1st class or good honours degrees whether or not there is a declared disability.

#### **Age**

The proportion of mature students (≥21 on entry) being awarded 1st class degrees is notably and consistently higher than the proportion of young students, whereas there is little difference in the proportion achieving good honours degrees.

### **3. ASSESSMENT AND MARKING PRACTICES**

The University’s academic quality system, detailed in the Academic Regulations and associated policies and procedures, is how the University ensures that all qualifications are of an appropriate academic standard. The regulations and policies confirm the University’s assessment and marking practices.

A Quality Enhancement Review (QER) undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in March 2020 confirmed that the University’s academic quality system meets the following requirements:

* the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) Part 1 for internal quality assurance
* the relevant baseline regulatory requirements of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales which include:
  + - The Framework for Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ)
    - The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW)
    - The expectations and the core and common practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

The University’s degree programme validation and re-validation processes ensure that expectations of graduates in disciplines are aligned with the QAA subject benchmark statements and, where relevant, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements.

External examiners are appointed and are full members of Examining Boards. External examiners submit annual reports and are asked to comment on the academic standard of awards and, where appropriate, submit recommendations. External examiners continue to affirm that the academic standards of the University’s awards meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework, and that degree outcomes are valid and reliable.

The University is in the process of recruiting an external advisor on academic standards to provide external scrutiny and expert advice on our degree outcomes, quality assurance, and academic standards processes at an institutional level, complementary to the work already undertaken by External Examiners.

### **4 ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE**

The Council is the governing body of the University and is responsible for the efficient management and conduct of all aspects of the affairs of the University. The Senate is the chief academic authority and is responsible, on behalf of the Council, for determining educational policy and regulations. The Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC), a sub-committee of Senate, has primary responsibility, explicitly delegated to it by Senate, for oversight of the standards of the University’s awards.

The Council receives an Annual Quality Report, from Senate and the ASQC, on the operation of the University’s academic quality system. The report, amongst other things, provides Council with the profile of degree outcomes, feedback from external examiners relating to academic standards of awards, and confirming how the University has continued to set and maintain academic standards. The Annual Quality Report provides the evidential basis upon which Council is assured of the academic standards of awards.

One of the main processes of the academic quality system, and which informs the annual quality report, is Annual Review and Enhancement (ARE). The ARE is undertaken by academic schools, reporting to ASQC via the Colleges, to ensure that expectations and requirements relating to academic standards and the quality of the student experience are satisfied and that there are plans for enhancement. A key element of ARE is the review of degree outcomes, including the reports from Examining Boards and external examiners, to ensure that academic standards are maintained.

### **5 CLASSIFICATION ALGORITHMS**

The degree classification algorithm and degree classification boundaries are detailed in the University’s [academic regulations](https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/public-information/policies-and-procedures/academic-regulations). The algorithm and boundaries have remained unchanged during the past five years and have been used since academic year 2013/14.

The degree classification algorithm calculates a final mark; the classification of degree based on which degree classification boundary the final mark is located within. The final mark is the combined average of the module marks (level 5 and 6 for Bachelor, and level 7 for integrated Master) contributing to the final award, weighted according to the level and credit value of the modules; details of weightings are included in the academic regulations.

If a final mark is within 2% points of a higher degree classification band, a higher classification is awarded if the stipulated number of credits at the specified levels have been achieved in the higher classification band (details of the number of credits to be achieved are included in the academic regulations).

The University has reviewed and confirmed that its degree algorithm is in alignment with the UK higher education sector’s [principles for effective algorithm design](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/principles-degree-algorithm-design.aspx).

### **6 TEACHING PRACTICES AND LEARNING RESOURCES**

The University has continued to invest to enhance the students’ leaning experiences by implementing its education and students’ sub-strategy.

The University’s learning digital learning environment (DLE) has been enhanced. The University has implemented an updated and more intuitive DLE through a phased roll-out of Blackboard Ultra Courses. The new DLE provides an improved user experience for both staff and students with students having a more consistent, streamlined, and mobile friendly platform.

The University has developed an education development toolkit to enhance the resources available staff when developing new degree programmes and to support the design of pedagogically driven programmes, which have a clear student-centred journey, and that are fully integrated with inclusiveness, employability, and sustainability. Employability, Skills and Graduate Attributes are an embedded element of the institutional expectations for degree programmes.

The University has enhanced its approach to staff development through the delivery of new Education Fellowship and Academic CPD programmes. Since 2021, 407 Fellowships have been awarded through the accredited Programmes. The impact of the Education Fellowship Programmes, accredited by Advance HE, became strongly apparent in 2023. As a result of the scaling-up of this provision, for the first time the annual numbers of Fellowships (Associate, Fellow and Senior Fellow) awarded to University staff substantially exceeded the Russell Group and sector averages.

### **7 IDENTIFYING GOOD PRACTICE AND ACTIONS**

#### Creating an Inclusive Learning Community

The University has an Inclusive Education project to take forward the ethnicity awarding gap work. A University-wide Inclusive Education Framework has been established which supports changes in the design and delivery of programmes in a holistic way that recognises the multiple factors underlying awarding gaps and the importance of intersectionality.

The project has developed guidance and resources which are published in the education development toolkit, runs inclusive education workshops, and embeds inclusivity into policy/framework reviews and the Education Fellowship programme. The project is running Inclusive Education workshops and undertaking bespoke work in schools via the Education Development Service.

The University is mapping its actions against the recommendations in the UUK #ClosingtheGap reports (2019 and 2022) to establish a clear understanding of progress to date and update an action plan for its work on reducing the awarding gap.

#### Marking and Academic Feedback

A review of the Marking and Moderation Policy and the Academic Feedback Policy has been concluded with new policies to be implemented from 2024/25. The changes to the policies respond to feedback received from academic staff, external examiners, and students, and enhance oversight of academic standards and improve academic feedback received by students which should better support them to achieve their potential.

The University has adopted and made available to its academic staff the Advance HE training to external examiners. The training supports academic staff to have an enhanced understanding of the expected oversight of academic standards.

#### Academic Integrity

The University has enhanced the advice provided to students about the importance of academic integrity. The University has developed and is making available to students an Academic Integrity Resource linked to three modules for students to complete.

The University has developed and published guidance to staff and students on Generative AI which covers areas such as potential concerns for assessment, benefits for teaching and learning, and using AI in assessment design. The guidance will be regularly updated.