University of Cumbria Degree Outcomes Statement 2020

1. Institutional degree classification profile (analysing student characteristics)

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

	Total Headcount (Rounded)	First class honours	Upper second class honours	First and Upper second combined	Lower second class honours	Third class honours / Pass
2014/15	**1,705**	245	810	1055	480	175
2015/16	**1,640**	250	750	1000	450	185
2016/17	**1,555**	260	690	950	430	175
2017/18	**1,425**	310	650	960	345	120
2018/19	**1,515**	370	595	965	405	140

Percentages:

	Headcount (Rounded)	First class honours	Upper second class honours	First and Upper second combined	Lower second class honours	Third class honours / Pass
2014/15	**1,705**	14.2%	47.4%	61.6%	28.0%	10.4%
2015/16	**1,640**	15.4%	45.9%	61.3%	27.4%	11.4%
2016/17	**1,555**	16.7%	44.4%	61.1%	27.5%	11.4%
2017/18	**1,425**	21.8%	45.6%	67.4%	24.2%	8.4%
2018/19	**1,515**	24.5%	39.3%	63.8%	26.8%	9.3%

***"Pass"* =** ordinary / non-honours award (following an honours course)

The overall 'good degree' attainment rate for the university for the academic year of 2018/9 was 63.1% for **full time**, first degree, undergraduate students. This was a decrease of 5.7% on the university rate of 68.8% for the previous year.   The fall was in part due to an increase in the number of students undertaking top-up degrees; across the sector, students undertaking 'top-up' degrees tend to achieve lower outcomes than students completing full Bachelor's degrees.

The overall 'good degree' attainment rate for the university for the academic year of 2018/9 was 69.1% for **part time**, first degree, undergraduate students. This was an increase of 14.4% on the university rate of 54.7% % for the previous year. This increase was in large part due to significant growth in Paramedic Practice degrees which delivered considerable improvements in 'good degree' outcomes (that is, First Class and Upper Second Class Honours combined).

Having considered our data in terms of particular student characteristics, we have identified:
- There is a gap in degree attainment between White students and that of students from all Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic groups. Five-year analysis shows that, for these students as an aggregated group, there has been sustained progress in narrowing the gap.
- Mature students outperform young students.
- There is a gap in the attainment of First and Upper Second class degrees for students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods and backgrounds of socioeconomic disadvantage.
- The gap in degree outcomes between disabled students and students without disability has narrowed but remains significant.
- In line with the sector, students studying top-up degree programmes tend not to achieve to the same level as students undertaking 3-year Bachelor's degrees.

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 sets out the range of positive steps it is taking to close attainment gaps for students with particular characteristics.

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 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, attend assessment boards 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 has been considered and endorsed by Academic Governance Committee and 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 calculating 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:

Type of Classification	Lower final mark threshold	Upper final mark threshold
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.

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 can be accessed here.

The University has not made changes to its degree classification algorithms in the last five years. The last change was made for the academic year 2010/11 when the degree classification weighting between Levels 5 and 6 was changed from 40/60 to 30/70, it being felt that a greater weighting for Level 6 better reflected the level of achievement of students by the end of their degree.

5. Teaching practices and learning resources

The University is committed to continual improvement of teaching and learning practice and has a detailed Action Plan aligned to the University's Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2017-22. Key enhancements to benefit teaching practices and learning resources in recent years include:

➢ A continued focus on the professional recognition of teaching through the UK Professional Standards Framework with 67% of permanent academic staff having achieved Fellowship as at May 2020
➢ The development of new high quality teaching and learning spaces designed to support formal, informal and social learning
➢ Significant annual investments in electronic library resources to ensure that students can access their reading regardless of their physical location and mode of study
➢ Close working with our partners to support students who study on validated and franchised programmes at our partner colleges, curating access to high quality open access library resources
➢ A focus on assessment literacy, with a range of projects including the rollout of assessment rubrics across the University. Assessment rubrics are designed to help students better understand assessment criteria, know how marks are allocated for work and to improve the quality of feedback on assessment

6. Identifying good practice and actions

External Examiners have, in recent years, commended:

- The dedication, experience and commitment of the University's teaching staff
- Good evidence of internal moderation and cross-site parity
- Varied and innovative assessment strategies
- Good range of learning opportunities
- Constructive and supportive feedback on assessment to students

The University has undertaken the following key actions during 2019/20:

- Introduced a new University Student Performance Group, responsible for ensuring that the University's data and reporting infrastructure delivers the most effective monitoring of student outcome data to support improvements to the student experience and student outcomes
- Increased levels of academic support for students at the London campus

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 increasing 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 the high quality teaching, learning opportunities and student support that will support their success both at University and beyond.

We have, within our Learning, Teaching and Assessment Action Plan, Student Success Strategy and Access and Participation Plan, identified a range of actions to improve the student experience, to address gaps in attainment and to support student success.

Approved by University Board
9 July 2020