University of Cumbria Degree Outcomes Statement 2021

First Degree Graduates' Classifications (FT & PT) - Headcounts (rounded down 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
2015/16	**1640**	250	750	1005	450	185
2016/17	**1555**	260	690	950	430	175
2017/18	**1425**	310	650	960	345	120
2018/19	**1515**	370	595	970	405	140
2019/20	**1560**	425	655	1080	370	115

First Degree Graduates' Classifications (FT & PT) - Percentages:

	Total Headcount (Rounded)	First Class Honours	Upper Second Class Honours	First and Upper Second Combined	Lower Second Class Honours	Third Class Honours / Pass
2015/16	**1640**	15.4%	45.9%	61.2%	27.4%	11.4%
2016/17	**1555**	16.7%	44.4%	61.1%	27.5%	11.4%
2017/18	**1425**	21.8%	45.6%	67.4%	24.2%	8.4%
2018/19	**1515**	24.5%	39.3%	63.9%	26.8%	9.3%
2019/20	**1560**	27.1%	42.0%	69.1%	23.6%	7.3%

(data extracted May 2021)

Undergraduate attainment of First and Upper Second Honours combined has returned to a similar level of 2017/18, having dipped in 2018/19. The fall in outcomes in 2018/19 was in part due to an increase in the number of students undertaking top-up degrees; with across the sector, students undertaking 'top-up' degrees tending to achieve lower outcomes than students completing full Bachelor's degrees. Considerable work was subsequently focussed on this area.

Some subject areas achieved improvement in outcomes in 2019/20 included Nursing (following a curriculum review) and STEM subjects.

Detailed analysis of the outcomes in 2019/20, has demonstrated that the Covid19 Emergency Regulations worked as intended to help students persist with study and assessment through the disruption of lockdown and to complete their work with minimal delay. In 2019/20 around 2% of all UG and PG students across the University had their award outcomes calculated on the basis of a revised profile under the Emergency Regulations, spread across more than 20 programmes and with no more than 6 in any area. There are no clusters associated with the degree programmes that have seen the greatest improvements.

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. The position across the specific groups is varied with outcomes for Asian students having fallen whereas outcomes for Black students have improved. The picture of trends across the sub-categories in this area fluctuates. This is area of targeted work across the University

- The performance of mature students has improved slightly on the previously year
- There has been an improvement in the attainment of First and Upper Second class degrees for students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods, with outcomes now equivalent to the average across the whole student population
- The gap in degree outcomes between students from backgrounds of socioeconomic disadvantage has improved
- Students with a known disability now achieve above the student population as a whole
- 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 but there has been an improvement with 'good' outcomes in these programmes

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.

The last permanent change to degree classifications 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. In academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21 the University approved Emergency and Additional Regulations in response to the Covid19 pandemic and in recognition of the impact on students and their learning. The degree calculation provisions of the Emergency and Additional Regulations will continue to apply to a small number of continuing students in 2021/22 and beyond, applying to any students who were studying modules counting towards degree classification during the period of March-August 2020.

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 are available here.

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:

➢ Employing good Curriculum Design and LTA practices to remove barriers to success for diverse student groups
➢ Implementation and embedding of the University's Curriculum Design Framework
➢ The development of new high quality teaching and learning spaces designed to support formal, informal and social learning
➢ Significant investment in online library and learning resources to support the delivery of a high quality learning and teaching experience whether students are studying on campus, on blended or on distance/online learning programmes
➢ 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 designed to help students better understand assessment criteria, to provide transparency in 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
- Varied and innovative assessment strategies
- Excellent examples of contextual and real-life focus on assessments to support future employment
- Constructive and supportive feedback on assessment to students
- Positive relationships between the University and its partners
- The Emergency Regulations (implemented as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic) which were seen as being proportionate, supportive and in line with sector best practice
- Good evidence of internal moderation and cross-site parity

The University has focussed on a number of key actions during 2020/21, including:

- Ensuring that Personal Tutoring was operating comprehensively and effectively to offer students consistent and interactive academic contact (particularly in the context of the blended learning mode necessitated during the Covid19 period)
- A focus on the monitoring of student engagement in their learning through the Student Engagement Dashboard and other online tools
- Investment in considerable staff development to support the delivery of high quality learning and teaching practice, whether on campus, blended or online
- The development of extensive resources for students to use in online learning, teaching and assessment
- A continued focus through the University's Student Performance Group to source, interrogate and learn from a rich range of internal and external data to understand factors influencing and impacting on student outcomes, including degree outcomes

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 and London. 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. The University's Access and Participation Plans take

a "Whole Provider" approach to improving outcomes for students in underrepresented groups with the intention that most institutional effort is devoted to creating curricula, teaching, pastoral and social systems which are inclusive and equal by default and which see the measures of success at different stages of the student lifecycle as interconnected. There is a further focus on interventions for specific groups of students where a significant gap exists between their achievement and that of students in the majority group.

The University will continue to monitor the impact of the application of Emergency and Additional Regulations implemented as a result of the Covid19 pandemic.

<div align="right">November 2021</div>