Degree Outcomes Statement 2019/20

This degree outcomes statement covers the following areas:

1. Institutional degree classification profile
2. Assessment and marking practices
3. Academic governance
4. Classification algorithms
5. Teaching practices and learning resources
6. Identifying good practice and action
7. Risks and challenges

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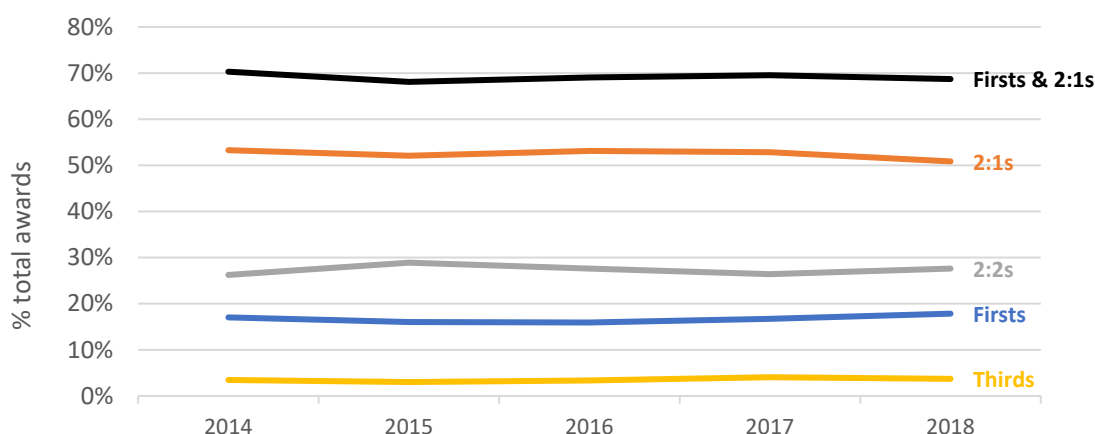Ranjit.sahota@roehampton.ac.uk   020 8392 3260

1. Institutional Degree Classification Profile

Since 2014 the degree classification profile at Roehampton has remained very stable, with a similar proportion of firsts, 2:1s, 2:2s and thirds awarded in all years between 2014 and 2018 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Degree classification trends at Roehampton over the last 5 years

Proportionally, students entering with A/AS level qualifications or with more entry tariff points are most likely to achieve a first or 2:1 degree. Typically, 75-79% of students in this category have achieved a first or 2:1 compared to 44–58% of BTEC entrants achieving the same results. This level of degree outcome has remained consistent over the past 5 years although there has been a marginal increase of firsts and 2:1s amongst lowest tariff entrants.

Outcomes remain stable amongst White and BAME students although the number of first-class degrees has increased for BAME students from 7% to 13% over the five-year period. Analysis of student date from different IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation) quintiles indicates those from more deprived backgrounds are more likely to have a lower proportion of firsts and 2:1s compared with those from less deprived backgrounds. There is significant overlap between these two groups of students with growth in BAME scores attributed to a number of initiatives targeted to support BAME students as led by the Access and Participation Plan.

There was no evidence of consistent trends amongst students belonging to different age groups or disability status. Degree outcomes vary by subject area, with significant differences of firsts and 2:1s awarded to students across departments. This variation appears to be partly explained by the variation in average entry tariff between the departments, as there is a significant correlation between departmental average entry tariff and attainment.

Other characteristics identified by the university have a notable impact on student attainment and degree outcomes. Female students have a consistently higher proportion of firsts and 2:1s compared to their male counterparts during this period (69-72% vs. 62-66%). This activity is most likely linked to the fact that male students enter with lower entry level tariffs than female students.

The university will continue to monitor these trends and commit to reducing the attainment gap between student groups through a targeted approach of student support.

2. Assessment and Marking Practices

Assessment is designed to enable students to demonstrate outcomes at appropriate levels as defined by the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications. Assessment criteria express the standards of achievement for the learning outcomes and are approved by a panel which includes two suitably qualified external advisers appointed by the University.

Assessments are marked in accordance with these criteria, using established marking scales. All marked assessments are subject to the process of moderation, the purpose of which is to ensure that there is consistency of marking.

This includes input from independent external examiners who are subject experts and appointed in line with robust suitability criteria. Their role is to ensure that the assessment procedures are applied consistently and fairly and report on this annually. The analysis of external examiner reports is considered at the University's Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee.

For students whose academic work may be affected by factors beyond their control, a Mitigating Circumstances Policy is in place. There is also a process for students who wish to appeal against an academic decision. It is designed to be clear, accessible and fair, and in line with the guidance provided by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

3. Academic Governance

The university maintains oversight of degree outcomes. It delegates to the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee the authority to approve all quality assurance procedures relating to assessment. The Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee has the responsibility of reporting to Senate by receiving and considering reports that include data on degree outcomes and through the degree participation and access plan. A quality and standards report regarding degree outcomes is submitted to Council.

The university operates a two-tier examination board system, the Programme Examinations Board and the Awards and Progression Board. Their terms of reference and membership are set out in the Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes which are approved by Senate. Those regulations are applied across the university. Examination boards for collaborative partners are held at the university, chaired by senior university staff, and the university's academic regulations are applied unless there is an approved variation.

The role of the Programme Examinations Board is to confirm marks at the module level. It ensures that all work has been marked and moderated, that the correct academic regulations have been applied, and that any mitigating circumstances are noted. There is a standard agenda to ensure consistency of approach across all programmes. External examiners are members of the Programme Examination Board. They bring to the meeting a vital independent and objective perspective and they ensure that the conduct of the Board is fair, consistent and transparent. They submit an annual report and collated responses are submitted to the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee for identifying any areas of concern. The Awards and Progression Board confirms the academic progress of individual students, confers academic awards and determines classification and fields of study.

There are several means by which the university exercises oversight of degree outcomes for e.g., the degree outcomes report which is considered by Senate, the Access and Participation

Plan which includes degree outcome data by characteristics and the Key Performance Indicators report which includes a section on degree outcomes and is considered by Senate and Council.

4. Classification Algorithms

The university has a single algorithm to calculate degree classifications for Bachelor's Degrees. Classifications are based on a weighted average of the percentage marks in the best 100 credits achieved at Level 6, and the next best 100 credits at Level 5 or 6 which the student has achieved at the university, rounded to the nearest whole number.

Level	Module Mark (20 credits)	Module Mark (20 credits)	Module Mark (20 credits)	Module Mark (20 credits)	Module Mark (20 credits)	Module Mark (20 credits)
Level 4	53	61	65	38	57	57
Level 5	62	65	57	63	68	70
Level 6	71	64	68	70	68	68

Table 1: Marks used for classification (▭ best 100 credits at Level 6 / ▭ next best 100 credits at Level 5 or 6)

Each mark is weighted in the calculation according to the credit value of the module to which it applies. In instances where the student has achieved less than 200 credits at the university, i.e. due to credit transfer, study abroad, or where the student is a Level 6 top-up, all Level 5 and 6 modules studied at the university contribute to the final degree classification (i.e. a weighted average of all Level 5 and 6 modules taken at the university, weighted by credit value of the module). To ensure parity, this algorithm is applied to awards delivered by collaborative partners.

The university regulations include a borderline rule which allows students whose weighted average mark (as calculated by the algorithm), is one percent below the border of the next classification to be awarded the higher classification mark if half of the credits at Level 6 are in the higher classification. This ensures a consistent approach across the university.

There is a small number of variations or exceptions applied to the algorithm used by the university. These exceptions relate to dual or joint award arrangements or where programme specific regulations have been approved, for e.g., BSc Adult Nursing, BA Primary Education. These variations to the standard algorithm are in place to accommodate practice-based modules.

The degree algorithms used by the university are regularly reviewed as core elements of the university regulations. The most recent changes to the degree algorithm include:

- Level 6 modules contribute at least 50% towards the final degree classification, (September 2015).
- Algorithm calculation includes all modules at Level 5 and 6 for students who had studied less than 200 credits at the university, (September 2015).
- The introduction of a borderline rule to deal with students whose weighted average mark is one percent below the border of the next classification, (September 2016).

5. Teaching practices and learning resources

Degree outcomes across the university have remained stable whilst the student body has become more diverse. Several measures have been put into place to ensure high quality teaching and positive outcomes for all.

A university-wide curriculum review was launched in 2016 to ensure that all programmes maintain high academic and professional standards. The curriculum structure is career-focused, and the teaching reflects the needs of the diverse study body by engaging students effectively in their studies.

In 2019 the student-led Catalyst-funded Re-Imagining Attainment for All (RAFA 2) project was completed. The project involved colleagues across the university embedding methods in curricula and using pedagogic approaches to reduce the attainment gap between students from different ethnicities. This work has helped to narrow the gaps in continuation and student outcomes for underrepresented students.

Where there is evidence of underperformance in relation to expectations, the programme teams work in collaboration with educational developers in learning and teaching to produce action plans in their Annual Programme Reviews. This work is closely monitored to improve student outcomes. A cross-university Assessment Literacy Working Group, established in 2018, oversees the development of assessment literacy initiatives to ensure that students engage effectively with assessment and fully understand what is needed for a successful outcome.

This work is supported by a module performance dashboard which integrates data on student feedback, engagement (attendance and digital) and outcomes (pass marks and failure rates), providing programme teams with information to identify strengths and weaknesses and to take appropriate action. The university recently made a step-change in how it uses feedback from students on their programmes.

The personal tutor role has been refocused as academic guidance tutor and new guidelines, training and expectations were set. This ensures that students are fully supported in their academic studies. In addition, enhanced online support has been introduced across the university to provide support and guidance for students' academic writing.

Improvements to teaching practices have been prioritised through a commitment to developing academic professionalism in learning and teaching which is evidenced through an increase of AdvanceHE fellowships awarded across the university.

6. Identifying good practice and action

The areas of good practice are identified as:

- The university undertakes an annual review of its regulations and policies to ensure that high academic standards are maintained and our procedures for quality assurance are continually monitored and implemented.
- The university regularly monitors degree outcomes by characteristics, department and programme.
- All work submitted for assessment, including examination scripts, are marked anonymously. This is a key feature of the work undertaken by the university to close the attainment gap.
- The implementation of the categorical marking framework which ensures clarity and consistency across markers and modules, ensures students understand their marks and enables the full range of marks to be used.

7. Risks and challenges

The university recognises the need to continue to monitor its degree outcomes and the impact of closing the student attainment gaps without causing grade inflation.