

Institutional degree classification profile

A summary of degree outcomes at Bournemouth University (BU) for the period 2014/15 to 2018/19 is provided in Table 1. In summary there has been a small increase in the proportion of First and Upper Seconds over the period.

Table 1: Overview of Bournemouth University degree outcomes 2014/15 to 2018/19

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Proportion achieving Firsts and Upper Seconds (%)					
Overall 1st/2.i	77.73	77.01	80.08	80.44	79.67
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) – Home	63.18	62.38	62.77	69.75	69.16
Mature	71.91	69.94	70.72	74.23	73.88
Young	79.46	79.26	82.72	82.36	80.86
Female	81.30	81.15	84.76	83.64	83.27
Male	73.61	71.65	74.43	76.36	75.36
Student Population Statistics (Graduating Cohorts)					
Overall student numbers	2824	2706	3213	3440	3409
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) – Home	296	319	368	433	467
Average tariff	132.73	132.76	130.71	126.72	123.71

Degree outcomes vary across different student groups as detailed in Table 1 including the number of Home students from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds graduating from the University which has increased over the period from 10% of the overall graduating population (296) to 14% (467). Over the same period the attainment of these students has improved, with 69% achieving a First or Upper Second in 2018/19 compared with 63% in 2014/15. The gap between Home BAME students' attainment and overall attainment has closed from 15% to 11% over the same period. **BU's Access and Participation Plan** provides details on targets and actions to further reduce the attainment gap. This plan is fully aligned to the University's 'Fusion' strategy by promoting progression and success for all students.

Over the review period there has been an attainment gap for mature students when compared with young students. In 2018/19 the attainment gap was 7%.

Similarly, on average, female students tend to outperform male students in their degree outcomes. As shown in Table 1, 83% of female students achieved good honours in 2018/19 compared to 75% of males. On average 55% of the graduating cohort is female.

As shown in Table 1 the average UCAS tariff of students graduating in each academic year has decreased slightly over the five year period by an average of 9.02 tariff points.

Assessment and marking practices

BU's Academic Regulations, Policies and Procedures provide an overarching framework for the assurance of assessment outcomes against sector reference points and published criteria. This framework ensures alignment to sector standards and assurance of the effectiveness of these policies and procedures is maintained through regular monitoring, review and reporting. Oversight is provided through the academic governance structures at faculty and university levels, reporting ultimately to the University Senate and University Board.

BU's **Programme Structure and Curriculum Design Characteristics** procedure outlines the requirements for programmes to align to recognised sector reference points including the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). Other reference points are also considered including characteristic statements applicable to certain types of qualification, subject benchmark statements and requirements published by Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). Alignment against key reference points is confirmed as part of the programme approval and review process: **Programme Approval, Review and Closure: Policy** with individual programmes being subject to review on a periodic basis. External academics are appointed during programme approval or review to provide independent advice and an objective perspective on the alignment of learning outcomes, assessment criteria and assessment methods.

The university has policies and procedures in place relating to assessment and marking practices, confirming expectations for both staff and students:

- **Marking, Independent Marking and Moderation: Policy and Procedure** outlines how assessed work will be marked to ensure all assessment is conducted in a manner that is consistent, fair and transparent. Assessment criteria are reinforced by the university's **Generic Assessment Criteria** to ensure consistency across programmes.
- Students may request special consideration through the **Exceptional Circumstances Policy and Procedure** which enables an individual's circumstances to be taken into account, allowing for fair assessment outcomes for all students.
- If a student wishes to appeal a decision of an Assessment Board the **Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure** is made available to all students and outlines the grounds under which an appeal would be considered.

External Examiners provide independent, expert and impartial oversight of assessments aligned to an award. **The External Examining: Policy and Procedure** outlines recruitment criteria as well as the process of appointment, ensuring that External Examiners are independent of the university. External Examiners submit an annual report to the university where they comment on the academic standard of degrees, the appropriateness of assessment methods, the distribution of marks, the consistency and clarity of the internal marking process and the administration of the process.

Academic governance

The university **Scheme of Delegation** identifies governance structures and responsibilities. As the academic governing body of Bournemouth University, Senate is ultimately responsible for policies and procedures governing assessment and examination

of the academic performance of students, and academic standards, with delegation to the Academic Standards and Education Committee (ASEC) where appropriate.

The university undertakes a holistic review of the outcomes and effectiveness of all quality assurance processes annually, including assessment. The Academic Quality annual report provides assurance at an institutional level regarding the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards through quality assurance and enhancement processes. It also provides overall assurance that the university's assessment processes have been applied fairly and are aligned with sector recognised standards. The report includes award outcomes, the conduct of assessment boards, exceptional circumstances procedures, academic offences, External Examining arrangements and an analysis of reports from External Examiners. The report is considered at the university's Academic Standards and Education Committee (ASEC) and Senate. Executively, the Audit, Risk and Governance Committee and the University Board also consider the report and its supporting action plan.

In addition to the Academic Quality annual report, ASEC receives an annual report providing statistics including detailed data on degree outcomes which is used to benchmark outcomes against sector results, and historical internal data. The analysis of institutional trends is referred to faculties and other relevant committees for further scrutiny and action as appropriate.

Assessment and classification algorithms

The university's Standard Assessment Regulations are published and made available for students on the **Important Information** pages. BU's assessment regulations are within accepted sector norms and have been designed as a balanced system to ensure a fair and equitable outcome for all students that as a principle reflects consistency of performance and achievement within a programme of study. The assessment regulations also recognise the potential for students to demonstrate enhanced levels of performance later in their programme once previous learning has been fully embedded. Students are required to demonstrate, through their assessments, that they have met the requirements of knowledge and understanding for minimum threshold standards at and across each level. In support of these principles, BU's assessment regulations provide relatively limited discretion for assessment boards in borderline cases and avoid both the rounding up of marks and condonation of failed assessments. In addition, no discounting of credit is allowed in calculating the final degree classification. Assessment regulations have limits on the volume of compensation and reassessment permitted at each level. In 2017 the university introduced the option to 'carry credit' up to a limited amount per level.

For undergraduate Honours provision degree classification is calculated using a weighting of 70% for Level 6 units and 30% for Level 5 units. Where students have joined a programme with advanced standing, classification is based on Level 6 units only (100%). Degree classification is reached by taking the most favourable outcome for the student from one of either two possible options: the 'credit-weighted aggregate' mark or the 'mark profile' rule. Students who are eligible for borderline consideration may have their award outcome uplifted to the higher classification if they meet the specified criteria.



Teaching practices and learning resources

BU2025 is BU's strategic plan, launched in 2018 as the successor to BU2018. As part of the 2018 strategic plan a centre of excellence in learning, the Centre for Fusion Learning, Innovation and Excellence (FLIE), was established to inspire and share effective teaching practice. The introduction of this Centre at the core of university structures has manifested itself positively in a number of ways, with students benefitting from the multitude of enhancements in the learning environment.

During the five year period on which this statement is focussed, a significant body of work has been undertaken to improve the student experience of assessment as well as students' understanding of the expectations of assessment. Over time this has had the effect of bolstering student performance and enabling students from a variety of social and educational backgrounds to achieve their full potential. For example, emphasis has been given to the provision of formative feedback within academic units and academic policy stipulates that all units include formative assessment within their design, enabling students to benefit from the principle of assessment for learning rather than assessment of learning. In addition, the introduction of a revised set of generic assessment criteria in September 2016 has improved the communication of assessment outcomes and feedforward into the next task. This has been supported by ongoing work promoting assessment literacy and greater emphasis given to more personalised student support and feedback.

BU has further strengthened the teaching practices of its academic staff through support for Advance HE fellowship over the period covered by this statement. The 2017/18 HESA staff record dataset shows that BU performs well with 73% of staff holding a teaching qualification and/or fellowship of Advance HE, ranking BU 25th out of 134 institutions. The latest internal data shows significant progress has been made with 85% of academic staff now holding a teaching qualification and/or fellowship of Advance HE. BU remains well above both the UK sector average, and Universities UK (UUK) average, in terms of staff with HEA Fellowship. This has built a broader awareness of pedagogy and the factors supporting success for individual students.

Other institutional initiatives likely to have contributed to improved student performance in more recent years include:

- **Peer Reflection on Education Practice (PREP)** activities with different themes identified by faculties from year to year, supporting continuous improvement in teaching and assessment practice;

- A very successful **Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL)** scheme which continues to evolve, and has become more focussed on assessment over time with over 280 PAL leaders providing support across all programmes.

The university library through its investments in resources and work spaces over the past five years has shown a 5% increase in the NSS score for library resources. In response to student demand, both study spaces and provision of library computers have been increased (the latter by 34% over 5 years). SCONUL statistics show that the university's spend on learning resources as a percentage of total library expenditure is in the upper quartile in the sector at 53.5%.

Identifying good practice

FLIE has been active in a range of interventions working with colleagues across all faculties, facilitating workshops on benchmarking, increased use of rubrics in assessment, improved guidance for students on expectations, and the development of support through a broad set of resources through the **Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Toolkit**, and the Assessment and Feedback Toolkit.

BU encourages staff to maintain a balanced portfolio of education, research and professional practice as fundamental to its strategy of 'Fusion'. Excellent teaching is underpinned by strong links to professional practice with 75% of current academic staff holding recognised professional affiliations. Furthermore, students benefit from teaching staff who are also engaged in research activities. The proportion of academic staff holding a doctorate is currently 74%, a figure which has increased from 50% in 2012.

2018/19 HESA data relating to sandwich placement years in UK universities indicates BU has the 4th highest absolute number of students undertaking sandwich placement years, ranking 7th in the UK for the proportion of students undertaking placement years. The drive to encourage our students to undertake sandwich placements continues to have a positive impact on degree outcomes and employability; BU ranks in the upper quartile for highly skilled employment in the recent Graduate Outcomes survey 2017/18. In addition to placement opportunities, and to further support employability within the curriculum, the university places major emphasis on professional practice and employer relevance with 67% of BU programmes, recognised by Professional, Statutory and Regulation bodies (PSRBs) as compared to 26% within the sector as whole.