

Institutional degree classification profile

A summary of degree outcomes at Bournemouth University (BU) for the period 2019/20 to 2023/24 is provided in Table 1. In summary there has been a reduction in the proportion of First and Upper Seconds over the period.

Table 1: Overview of Bournemouth University degree outcomes 2019/20 to 2023/24

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Proportion of Firsts and Upper Seconds (%)					
Overall 1st/2.i	81.1	80.8	78.2	74.9	73.3
Mature	75.2	77.1	79.1	80.9	75.7
Young	82.3	81.6	78.0	73.4	72.8
Female	84.8	85.0	84.2	80.6	79.1
Male	76.9	76.2	71.2	67.8	66.2
Asian	63.9	72.7	67.9	52.4	63.0
Black	57.5	56.0	51.5	56.7	45.7
Mixed	72.7	79.4	71.8	66.4	65.2
White	84.8	83.5	81.3	77.5	75.4
Other	65.8	80.0	65.7	65.4	67.6
Student Population Statistics (Graduating Cohorts)					
Overall student numbers	3524	3655	3400	2961	3178
Average tariff	121.2	118.2	114.3	116.4	120.3

For the third consecutive year, mature students received a higher proportion of First and Upper Second class degrees than young students: 75.7% compared to 72.8%. This follows a narrowing of the attainment gap since 2019/20.

Female students continue to outperform male students in their degree outcomes, with the attainment gap remaining relatively stable compared to the previous year (12.9%).

Degree outcomes by Ethnic Origin are given for Home students only. The proportion of First and Upper Seconds by Ethnic Origin Group can fluctuate due to relatively small cohort sizes. The number of Asian students reduced from 166 in 2019/20 to 119 in 2023/24, while the number of Black students graduating reduced from 125 in 2020/21 to 70 in 2023/24.

In 2023/24, the proportion of First and Upper Seconds awarded by Ethnic Origin recovered from 52.4% in 2022/23 to 63.0% for Asian students. There was also a slight increase for the small number of students of other ethnicities. However, proportions for Black students fell from 56.7% to 45.7%, and there were slight decreases for White students and those of mixed ethnic origin, aligned with the cohort as a whole. The proximity of the overall average mark (63.1%) to the 2.i / 2.ii boundary (60%)

means that large “Good Honours” attainment gaps can result from much smaller differences in average mark. The difference of 29.7% in the proportion of First and Upper Second class degrees awarded between Black and White Students in 2023/24 arises from average marks of 59.0% and 63.5% respectively, a difference of 4.5%. Action to address these attainment gaps is identified in the current Access and Participation Plan, with activity to address the Ethnicity Degree Awarding Gaps embedded in our intervention strategies in the new 2025/26 to 2028/29 Access and Participation Plan.

2023/24 marks the second year where the average UCAS tariff of students graduating has increased, by 3.9 points. Tariff points on entry are likely to have been inflated by alternative processes used during the pandemic to award grades in 2020/21 and 2021/22, such as the use of centre assessed grades to assess school leavers. These students formed the majority of 2022/23 and 2023/24 graduates and therefore the increase in UCAS tariff points is an unreliable indicator of improved attainment of new entrants compared to previous cohorts. Access to schools and colleges varied a lot during the pandemic and the ongoing impact of this is still unknown.



However, there is strong evidence to suggest that 2020/21 and 2021/22 enrolments entered higher education with differential knowledge and skills compared to those prior to them, potentially contributing to lower attainment rates seen in the latest data.

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.

Consistent with previous years, all BU Examiners confirmed in 2023/24 that the standards set for the award of degrees were appropriate and marking processes had been appropriately conducted.

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 Education Committee where appropriate.

The University undertakes a holistic review of the outcomes and effectiveness of all quality assurance processes annually, including assessment. The Quality and Standards 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 Education Committee and Senate. Executively, the Student Experience, Quality and Standards Committee and the University Board also consider the report and its supporting action plan.

In addition to the Quality and Standards annual report, Education Committee 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 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. Students are able 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.

In 2020/21, BU approved the removal of the 1% discretionary borderline policy following the mapping of the assessment regulations against the **Principles for effective algorithm design** (published by Universities UK (UUK) and GuildHE on behalf of the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) in July 2020) in recognition that the use of any discretionary rule within a degree algorithm may not be consistently applied, can become subjective and lead to inequitable or unfair decisions. This was approved for implementation for new students from 2021/22, with the first cohort to be affected by the change graduating in 2023/24.

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. The introduction of a revised set of generic assessment criteria 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.

The University's generic assessment criteria aligns with the **QAAs Outcome Classification Descriptors** (2024).

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 2023/24 HESA staff record dataset shows that BU performs well with 72% of staff holding a teaching qualification and/or fellowship of Advance HE, 10 pp above the sector average of 62%, ranking BU 35th out of 151 Higher Education Institutions.

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

- **Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review (AMER)** requires all programmes, departments and Faculties to review and action the institutional theme(s) which has been focussed on BAME attainment for the past three years, supporting more inclusive review of curricula as well as learning, teaching and assessment practices. An annual Inclusivity Health Check for departments is now embedded in the annual monitoring process.

- **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 and is closely aligned to BU's Access and Participation Plan.

In response to student demand, both study spaces and provision of library computers has been increased. 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.

Identifying good practice, and actions

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 51% 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 68%, a figure which has increased from 50% in 2012.

The drive to encourage our students to undertake sandwich placements continues to have a positive impact on degree outcomes and employability; based on the 2021/22 Graduate Outcomes survey 73% of BU undergraduates are in highly skilled employment compared to 72% across the sector. 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 77% of BU programmes, recognised by Professional, Statutory and Regulation bodies (PSRBs) as compared to 30% within the sector as whole.