

Institutional degree classification profile

1. The University undertakes a detailed annual analysis of degree outcome performance that considers a range of student characteristics and subject mix over time. The headline figures from this analysis are shown in table 1 below.

Academic year	1 st class	Upper second class	First/Upper Second	Lower second class	Third class	Other honours
2019/20	33.4%	47.9%	81.3%	16.5%	2.1%	0.1%
2020/21	33.6%	50.0%	83.6%	14.3%	1.7%	0.4%
2021/22	30.0%	50.8%	80.8%	16.2%	2.0%	1.0%
2022/23	23.3%	51.2%	74.5%	22.5%	3.1%	-
2023/24	20.0%	53.7%	73.7%	23.5%	2.8%	-

Table 1: University of Sussex - Degree outcome performance 2020 - 2024

2. From the detailed analysis the University observes that the percentage of combined first and upper second-class degrees (Good Degrees) awarded has decreased by nearly 10% from a high in 2020/21 of 83.6% to 73.7% in 2023-24. At a more granular level there has been a decrease in the number of first-class degrees and an increase in the award of upper second and lower second-class awards.
3. Further commentary on degree outcome by demographic profile can be found at **Appendix 1**.

Assessment and Marking Practices

4. The University assures itself that assessment criteria meet sector reference points through the following key routes:
 - The rigorous design, development and validation of courses
 - The accreditation/recognition of courses by Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)
 - Boards of Study produce marking criteria on an annual basis, and these are kept under review by Faculty/School Education Committees
 - The anonymous marking of assessments (wherever practicable to do so)
 - Moderation processes (internal and external) to ensure consistency and rigour
 - Operation of a two-tier system of examination board system for all provision leading to a University of Sussex award (including where delivered by a collaborative partner).
 - Rigorous external examiner appointment process, in line with the sector standards. External examiners attend examination boards where module and award outcomes are reviewed, discussed and ratified and produce annual reports which feed into the University's quality and standards processes.
 - Validation, revalidation and periodic review panels with built-in external peer review to provide additional scrutiny
 - Academic Appeals process independent of course and module teams to ensure fairness and rigour.

- Continuing and Professional Development activities for academic and academic-related staff

5. See **Appendix 2** for further detailed information.

Academic Governance

6. The University Regulations articulate the academic governance of the University. Under Regulation 8 Senate is responsible for academic standards and the direction and regulation of academic matters. Senate provides annual assurance to Council (the Governing Body) on the academic standards of awards and related quality of learning opportunities. Council has consistently accepted this assurance.
7. The University Education Committee (UEC), a sub-committee of Senate with delegated responsibility to oversee the quality and academic standards of the University's awards through established processes for validation and revalidation, annual course monitoring and periodic review. UEC also maintains oversight of the external examiner system on behalf of Senate and receives annual reports that consistently provide assurance of undergraduate awards.
8. On behalf of UEC, the Education and Students Regulations Sub-Committee (ESRSC) oversees the development and implementation of the University's student regulations and associated policies for taught awards. ESRSC continues to monitor the workings of the University's assessment regulations, making reference, where appropriate, to practice elsewhere in the sector. The underlying principles for this are a commitment to ensuring fairness in assessment and ensuring that the regulations support student retention, progression and achievement. Any recommendations for regulatory or associated procedural changes are referred to UEC for formal approval.
9. The standards of the awards of the University are set and maintained within frameworks set out in:
 - Charter, Statutes and Regulations of the University
 - University of Sussex Progression and Award Regulations
 - Quality Assurance processes
10. External requirements (including those in the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education) are enshrined within these documents. These frameworks are approved through Senate and its sub-committees and are revised regularly to reflect changing demands and to improve efficiency.
11. The University's processes relating to collaborative provision are mapped to the UK Quality Code and articulated in a Partner Handbook. Partner organisations delivering Sussex-validated provision are subject to additional quality assurance mechanisms over and above those applied to on-campus provision. These include:
 - Institutional Recognition (which takes place every 3-5 years);
 - course re-validation (every 3-5 years)
 - a detailed annual monitoring process.

All processes report to UEC.

12. Each Partner organisation has its own set of academic regulations which are audited to ensure alignment with the principles underpinning Sussex's regulations. Any changes to these regulations or any policies relating to academic matters are required to be approved by the Chair of UEC.

See **Appendix 3** for further information.

Classification algorithms

13. The University uses three algorithms to calculate final awards. Details of how each algorithm is applied is included in the University's [Undergraduate Progression and Award Regulations](#) which are available to all students on the University's website. Further information on how the algorithms are applied can be found at **Appendix 4**.
14. The University operates a borderline zone at each classification boundary. An Examination Board will uplift an award into the higher classification where a student has met the following criteria:
- a grand mean mark of up to 1% below the higher classification boundary, and
 - 50% or more of the final stage credit that contributes to the award is in the higher classification band.
15. Exceptional circumstances do not provide grounds for reclassification of an award.
16. Students are allowed a first attempt at every assessment followed by a capped resit should they fail to reach the minimum pass mark. Examination Boards have the discretion to offer a second and final capped resit for one or more modules, provided at least 60 credits have been achieved at the same level. Students with approved exceptional circumstances are permitted a first sit or uncapped second sit. This is in line with sector norms.

Teaching practices and learning resources

17. The University is committed to ensuring that students receive a transformative, high-quality education and learning experience that will allow them to realise the futures that they want. The cross University work of the [Educational Enhancement](#) team and the [Academic Quality and Partnership](#) teams, provide a range of professional services to staff to support the development of high-quality teaching, learning and assessment.
18. The following three key areas illustrate ongoing improvements to teaching practices and learning resources:
- An **ongoing commitment to the professional development** of staff to develop and enhance their education practice. This includes supporting staff to gain Fellowships of the HEA at the level appropriate to their experience and role, with all staff engaged in the activity of teaching and supporting learning encouraged to gain HEA accredited qualifications. The University supports Fellowship applications at all levels to the HEA. In 2024 the University has 5 National Teaching Fellows, who have been recognised for the outstanding contribution and impact that their practice has made to student outcomes and the teaching profession in higher education. The University is also proud of its three teams that have in recent years received a Collaborative

Award for Teaching Excellence, which recognise and reward collaborative work that has a demonstrable impact on teaching and learning.

- The **Scholarship of Teaching Learning** which aims to improve our students' education at experience through staff engagement with existing knowledge on teaching and learning, self-reflection on teaching and learning practices and the public sharing of research, reflection and ideas about teaching and learning. An Education and Scholarship pathway follows the traditional academic career structure from Lecturer to Professor based on evidence of the excellence of contribution to education provision within and beyond the University.
 - **Education and Innovation funds** which are designed to provide funds for projects that explore new ideas in teaching and learning at Sussex. These funds are not for existing programmes unless there is a significant new element to the work. Funded projects will be evaluated with the possibility of shaping future investment at Sussex.
 - To promote excellence in education, the University hosts an annual **Education Festival**, which provides an opportunity for the community of educators to come together to share and develop effective practice, research and innovation in teaching and learning including to disseminate the outcomes of funded projects.
 - **School Experience and Outcomes Planning** which places an emphasis on the rigorous use of qualitative and quantitative data to drive quality improvement and enhancement of the student experience.
19. The University continues to develop its facilities and services to support the academic experience of our students. A suite of IT, Estates and Education and Research improvement projects are at various stages of development that include the refurbishment of existing teaching spaces, a wifi improvement project, the opening of a new Student Centre, and the implementation of a new student records system. A major estates development programme that includes the provision of new halls of residence and a new Health and Wellbeing Centre, incorporating a GP Surgery is in progress.

Identifying good practice and actions

20. In July 2024 Council approved the new University Strategy 2035. This replaces the previously agreed Strategic Framework for 2025 (agreed March 2018). The Education and Student Life aspect of this has three broad goals:
- We will support students from a diversity of backgrounds and experiences to access education at Sussex and we will enable all students to flourish whilst here and beyond.
 - We will equip our students for global citizenship and for life and work in a changing world by embedding environmental sustainability, human flourishing, and digital and data futures in the curriculum.
 - In partnership with our students, we will deliver improvement and excellence, in all aspects of education and student life.
- In December 2024 the University received approval for a new Access and Participation Plan (APP) from the Office for Students (OfS). This will take effect in the 2024-2025 year. In the meantime the existing APP applies, and which aims to:

- Reduce the awarding gap between Asian and white students from 21% to 4.2% by 2024/25 (eliminating the unexplained gap, based on OfS differences in student outcomes by ethnicity analysis), seeking to eliminate the remaining gap by 2029/30.
- Reduce the awarding gap between black and white students from 25% to 5% by 2024/25, (eliminating the unexplained gap, based on OfS differences in student outcomes by ethnicity analysis), seeking to eliminate the remaining gap by 2029/30.

21. The University remains committed to reducing the international ethnic minorities awarding gap, in line with the University's OfS targets set through the Access and Participation Plan (APP) for UK White-Asian and UK White-Black awarding gaps.

Appendix 1: Institutional degree classification by demographic profile 2024

- For 2024 the proportion of first class-degrees awarded declined from a high of 33.6% in 2020/21 to 20% in 2023/24. The proportion of upper second-class degrees and lower second-class degrees increased.

Academic year	1 st class	Upper second class	First/Upper Second	Lower second class	Third class	Other honours
2019/20	33.4%	47.9%	81.3%	16.5%	2.1%	0.1%
2020/21	33.6%	50.0%	83.6%	14.3%	1.7%	0.4%
2021/22	30.0%	50.8%	80.8%	16.2%	2.0%	1.0%
2022/23	23.3%	51.2%	74.5%	22.5%	3.1%	-
2023/24	20.0%	53.7%	73.7%	23.5%	2.8%	-

- In 2024 a higher proportion of Home students achieved a 1st/2:1 combined than our international domiciled students.
- For UK domiciled students, there has been a reduction in the proportion of first and upper second-class degrees to 79.3% in 2024 from a high of 90.7% in 2020. In 2024 there has been a 2.9% increase in the proportion of 1sts and 2:1s for non-UK domiciled students on the previous year.

Domicile	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
UK	90.7%	90.6%	88.0%	82.7%	79.3%
Non-UK	59.1%	69.0%	67.1%	58.0%	60.9%

- Throughout this period, white UK domiciled students have continued to achieve a higher proportion of first class or upper second degrees than UK domiciled students identifying as black and minority ethnic (BAME).

Ethnicity UK only	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
White	92.3%	92.0%	90.1%	86.9%	84.3%
BAME	84.4%	85.3%	82.8%	71.4%	70.6%

- UK domiciled students who identify as Black, Asian Mixed or Other ethnicities achieve fewer first/upper second-class degrees than those who identify as white.

Ethnicity (detail)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
White	92.3%	92.0%	90.1%	86.9%	84.3%
Asian	85.8%	87.8%	84.2%	75.2%	71.0%
Black	74.3%	75.5%	71.6%	61.1%	59.3%
Mixed	89.7%	90.0%	85.2%	74.4%	74.4%
Other	88.6%	81.4%	93.3%	69.9%	80.9%

6. The data shows that across the five year period women have better good degree outcomes than men.

Gender	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Male	76.2	78.7	75.2	67.5	68.8
Female	85.5	87.6	85.5	80.1	77.7

7. 1st/2:1 outcomes for students with a disability continue to exceed those with no known disability in every year.

Disability	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
No disability reported	79.7	82.5	79.5	71.7	72.2
Disability reported	85.9	86.9	84.8	82.2	79.8

Appendix 2: Assessment and Marking Practices

The regulation of standards is set out in the Undergraduate Award and Progression regulations and associated policies and procedures.

The University assures itself that assessment criteria meet sector reference points through the following key routes:

- The rigorous design and development of courses, which culminates in consideration by a validation panel with requisite expertise, including internal and external representation. Course design and the panel's considerations are referenced against the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and other sector standards. Learning outcomes are aligned to the relevant level of the FHEQ and assessments are designed to test these learning outcomes.
- The accreditation and or recognition of courses by Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), demonstrating that specific standards or requirements are, and continue to be met.
- Marking criteria which set out the characteristics of assessed work that attract different ranges of marks from the marking scale, appropriate to the discipline, are produced annually by Boards of Study, and are kept under review by Faculty/School Education Committees.
- The anonymous marking of all assessment, where this is practical, to ensure that there is no bias in the marking process.
- Assessments that contribute to progression or award are internally moderated and considered by external examiners to ensure consistency of marking.
- The operation of a rigorous external examiner appointment process, in line with sector standards, which includes University led induction. Examiners are appointed to:
 - advise the University on whether the academic standards of its awards are consistent with the standards defined by the University, the standards of similar awards elsewhere and the standards maintained by professional bodies and accrediting agencies
 - provide an external evaluation of the extent to which processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are consistently and fairly applied.
- External Examiners are required to:
 - approve heavily weighted assessment tasks
 - review a sample of student work for the modules to which they are appointed,
 - participate in Examination Boards where marks and awards are considered and confirmed
 - complete an annual report which provides their views on the assessment process. These reports are centrally screened so that issues related to assessment practice can be addressed.
- The University produces a summary of annual reports submitted by external examiners, including their views on academic standards and how they compare with the wider sector; these are considered annually by the University Education Committee and reported to Senate.

- The University has participated in Advance HE's External Examiner professional development training.
- External peers are appointed to the validation, revalidation and periodic review panels to provide external scrutiny and to ensure that academic standards and the quality of the student experience are assured from the outset.
- An Academic Appeals procedure is available to students and is independent from course and module teams to ensure fairness and rigour throughout the scheme.
- The professional development of academic staff through a range of activities including acting as external examiners, undertaking research and scholarship and engaging in professional development including that leading to fellowship at all levels from Advance HE in recognition and development of their teaching practice.

Appendix 3: Academic Governance

1. The University Regulations articulate the academic governance of the University. Under Regulation 8 Senate is responsible for academic standards and the direction and regulation of academic matters. Senate provides annual assurance to Council (the Governing Body) that it continues to manage and oversee the academic standards of awards and related quality of learning opportunities. Council has consistently accepted this assurance.
2. The University Education Committee (UEC) is a committee of Senate and has delegated responsibility for all matters related to educational strategy and policy of the University. The Committee has responsibility for the maintenance of the academic standards of the University's awards through established processes for validation and revalidation, annual course monitoring and periodic review. UEC also maintains oversight of the external examiner system on behalf of Senate and receives annual reports that consistently provide assurance of undergraduate awards.
3. On behalf of UEC, the Education and Students Regulation Sub-Committee (ESRSC) oversees the development and implementation of the University's Award and Progression Regulations and associated policies for taught awards. ESRSC continues to monitor the workings of the University's regulations, referring, where appropriate, to practice elsewhere in the sector. The underlying principles for this are a commitment to ensuring fairness in assessment and ensuring that the regulations support student retention, progression and achievement. Any recommendations for regulatory or associated procedural changes are referred to UEC for formal approval
4. The University Education Committee receives an annual report on Undergraduate Degree Outcomes, which looks at outcome data over ten years, highlighting trends in both degree awarding patterns and awarding gaps between different groups of students. The report also compares University of Sussex outcomes against a self-selected peer competitor group and the sector as a whole.
5. The standards of the awards of the University are set and maintained within frameworks set out in:
 - Charter, Statutes and Regulations of the University
 - Academic Framework
 - University of Sussex Progression and Award Regulations
 - Quality Assurance processes
6. External requirements including those in the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education are enshrined within these documents. These frameworks are approved through Senate and its sub-committees and are revised regularly to reflect changing demands and to improve efficiency.
7. The University's processes relating to collaborative provision are mapped to sector standards including the UK Quality Code and articulated in the Partner Handbook. Partner organisations delivering Sussex-validated provision are subject to additional quality assurance mechanisms over and above those applied to on-campus provision. These include:
 - Institutional Recognition (which takes place every 3-5 years)
 - course re-validation (every 3-5 years)

- a detailed annual monitoring process
8. All processes report to the UEC. Each Partner organisation has its own set of academic regulations which are audited to ensure alignment with the principles underpinning Sussex's regulations. Any changes to these regulations or any policies relating to academic matters are required to be approved by the Chair of UEC.

Appendix 4: Classification algorithms

The University uses three algorithms to calculate final awards. Details of how each algorithm is applied is included in the University's Undergraduate Progression and Award Regulations, which are available to all students on the University's website. Further information on how the algorithms are applied is outlined below:

1. Three Year Bachelor's Degree

A student who is registered on a 3-year Bachelors degree with Honours will be considered for the award where they have achieved not less than 360 credits at the prescribed level and a capped stage mean of 40% in the final year. Classification will be calculated using the following algorithm to achieve an overall grand mean:

- Level 5 mean based on all 120 credits with a weighting of 40%
- Level 6 mean based on all 120 credits from the final year with a weighting of 60%

2. Four-year Bachelors degree including an integrated study abroad or a placement year

A student who is registered on a 4-year Bachelors degree with Honours, that includes an integrated study abroad or a placement year, will be considered for the award where they have achieved not less than 480 credits at the prescribed level and a capped stage mean of 40% in the final year. Classification will be calculated using the following algorithm to achieve an overall grand mean; will include the marks achieved on the study abroad/placement year:

- Year 2/Level 5 mean based on all 120 credits with a weighting of 32%
- Year 3 - Study Abroad/Placement Year mean based on all 120 credits with a weighting of 20%
- Year 4/Level 6 mean based on all 120 credits with a weighting of 48%

3. Four-year Integrated master's degrees

A student who is registered on a 4-year Integrated Master's degree will be considered for the award where they have achieved not less than 480 credits at the prescribed level and a capped stage mean of 50% in the final stage. Classification will be calculated using the following algorithm to achieve an overall grand mean:

- Year 2/Level 5 mean based on all 120 credits with a weighting of 24.242%
- Year 3/Level 6 mean based on all 120 credits with a weighting of 36.364%
- Year 3/Level 7 mean based on all 120 credits at a ratio with a weighting of 39.394%

The marks achieved on a voluntary study abroad/placement year do not contribute to classification.

Classification will be calculated using the same algorithm applied to 3-year bachelor's degrees (see 1) or an Integrated Master's Degree (see 3).

Classification

The final classification of a student's undergraduate award is determined using the following overall framework, which is in line with common practice for English higher education providers:

An overall grand mean of 70 – 100%	First class honours
An overall grand mean of 60 – 69%	Upper second-class honours
An overall grand mean of 50 – 59%	Lower second-class honours
An overall grand mean of 40 – 49%	Third class honours

In all calculations (module, stage and grand mean) the University rounds marks into a whole number.

Marks equal to or greater than 0.45 are rounded up, those equal to or less than 0.44 are rounded down.

University of Sussex – Degree Outcomes Statement			
Version 2024	University Education Committee Approved - December 2024	Senate Approved March 2025	Council Approved