

# University of Westminster Degree Outcome Statement

## Institutional Degree Classification Profile

The University has utilised data from [HESA table 16](#) to produce these data profiles.

### **First and upper second class classification rate by year of graduation**

'- First degree graduates exiting with a classified degree

- Significance: A +/- indicates that the rate for the later year is significantly above/below the equivalent rate in 2017/18

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Difference (2019/20 - 2017/18)	Sig.	Difference (2021/22 - 2017/18)	Sig.
All	70.4%	66.1%	74.0%	75.2%	71.1%	+3.6	+	+0.7	

### **First and upper second class classification rate by year of graduation and sex**

'- First degree graduates exiting with a classified degree

- Students declaring legal sex of 'other' are included with 'female'

- Significance: A +/- indicates that the rate for the later year is significantly above/below the equivalent rate in 2017/18 or that the rate for female graduates in the stated year is significantly above/below the rate for male graduates

Sex	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Difference (2019/20 - 2017/18)	Sig.	Difference (2021/22 - 2017/18)	Sig.
Male	63.5%	60.4%	69.2%	68.3%	65.5%	+5.7	+	+2.0	
Female	75.0%	69.8%	77.0%	79.6%	74.5%	+2.0		-0.5	
Difference	+11.5	+9.4	+7.9	+11.3	+9.0				
Sig.	+	+	+	+	+				

### **First and upper second class classification rate by year of graduation and ethnicity**

'- UK-domiciled first degree graduates exiting with a classified degree

- Students where ethnicity is not known / refused are included with white

- Significance: A +/- indicates that the rate for the later year is significantly above/below the equivalent rate in 2017/18 or that the rate for white graduates in the stated year is significantly above/below the rate for BAME graduates

Ethnicity	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Difference (2019/20 - 2017/18)	Sig.	Difference (2021/22 - 2017/18)	Sig.
BAME	61.7%	57.8%	69.0%	70.3%	67.5%	+7.2	+	+5.8	+
White	82.7%	77.9%	82.2%	84.1%	82.7%	-0.5		+0.0	
Difference	+20.9	+20.1	+13.2	+13.8	+15.1				
Sig.	+	+	+	+	+				

### **First and upper second class classification rate by year of graduation and relative disadvantage (IMD)**

'- UK-domiciled first degree graduates exiting with a classified degree

- Students where domicile is not known are excluded

- Significance: A +/- indicates that the rate for the later year is significantly above/below the equivalent rate in 2017/18 or that the rate for less disadvantaged graduates (Q3-Q5) in the stated year is significantly above/below the rate for more disadvantaged graduates (Q1-Q2)

Relative disadvantage (IMD)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Difference (2019/20 - 2017/18)	Sig.	Difference (2021/22 - 2017/18)	Sig.
IMD Q1-Q2	63.9%	59.3%	69.4%	70.5%	68.1%	+5.5	+	+4.2	+
IMD Q3-Q5	77.3%	73.2%	79.6%	81.5%	78.5%	+2.3		+1.2	
Difference	+13.4	+13.8	+10.2	+11.0	+10.4				
Sig.	+	+	+	+	+				



### First and upper second class classification rate by year of graduation and domicile

<sup>1</sup>- First degree graduates exiting with a classified degree

- Significance: A +/- indicates that the rate for the later year is significantly above/below the equivalent rate in 2017/18 or that the rate for non-UK domiciled graduates in the stated year is significantly above/below the rate for UK graduates

Domicile	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Difference (2019/20 - 2017/18)	Sig.	Difference (2021/22 - 2017/18)	Sig.
UK	70.4%	65.9%	74.1%	75.7%	72.8%	+3.7	+	+2.4	
Other	70.6%	66.7%	73.9%	74.1%	67.3%	+3.3		-3.3	
Difference	+0.2	+0.8	-0.2	-1.7	-5.5				
Sig.									-

### First and upper second class classification rate by year of graduation and mode

<sup>1</sup>- First degree graduates exiting with a classified degree

- Significance: A +/- indicates that the rate for the later year is significantly above/below the equivalent rate in 2017/18 or that the rate for FT graduates in the stated year is significantly above/below the rate for PT graduates

Mode	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Difference (2019/20 - 2017/18)	Sig.	Difference (2021/22 - 2017/18)	Sig.
PT	40.7%	39.7%	40.8%	50.5%	40.5%	+0.1		-0.2	
FT	74.4%	69.4%	77.2%	77.6%	74.4%	+2.8	+	-0.0	
Difference	+33.7	+29.6	+36.4	+27.1	+33.9				
Sig.	+	+	+	+	+				

### First and upper second class classification rate by entry qualifications and year of graduation

<sup>1</sup>- First degree graduates exiting with a classified degree

- Percentage point differences are shown relative to 2017/18 rates

- Significance: A +/- indicates that the rate for the year and entry qualification group is significantly above/below the equivalent rate in 2017/18

Entry qualifications	2017/18	2019/20			2021/22		
	%	%	Δ	Sig.	%	Δ	Sig.
HE level qualifications	65.1%	72.3%	+7.3	+	63.0%	-2.0	
A levels AAB+	94.1%	100.0%	+5.9		98.1%	+4.0	
A levels AAC-BBC	87.8%	88.6%	+0.8		93.3%	+5.5	+
A levels BCC-CCC	78.3%	88.3%	+10.0	+	84.3%	+6.0	
Baccalaureate	78.3%	81.6%	+3.3		73.7%	-4.6	
BTEC high graded	57.6%	61.4%	+3.9		63.4%	+5.8	
BTEC low graded	55.5%	57.7%	+2.2		54.9%	-0.6	
Other level 3 106+	79.1%	82.0%	+2.9		75.3%	-3.8	
Other level 3 91-105	69.7%	78.9%	+9.2	+	79.1%	+9.5	+
Other level 3 1-90	69.7%	72.9%	+3.2		73.7%	+4.0	
Other level 3 w/o tariff	73.9%	75.7%	+1.8		72.5%	-1.4	
Other / no formal qualifications	52.9%	66.7%	+13.7		75.7%	+22.7	+
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70.4%</b>	<b>74.0%</b>	<b>+3.6</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>71.1%</b>	<b>+0.7</b>	

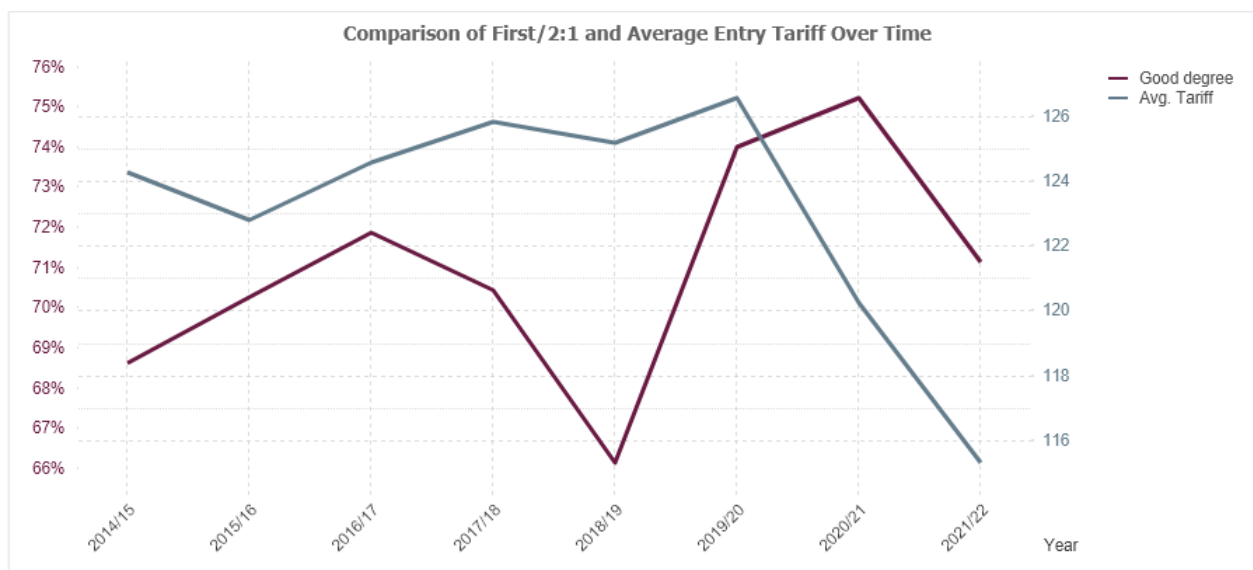
### First class classification rate by entry qualifications and year of graduation

<sup>1</sup>- First degree graduates exiting with a classified degree

- Percentage point differences are shown relative to 2017/18 rates

- Significance: A +/- indicates that the rate for the year and entry qualification group is significantly above/below the equivalent rate in 2017/18

Entry qualifications	2017/18	2019/20			2021/22		
	%	%	Δ	Sig.	%	Δ	Sig.
HE level qualifications	19.6%	25.6%	+5.9	+	17.5%	-2.1	
A levels AAB+	42.6%	69.8%	+27.2	+	56.6%	+14.0	
A levels AAC-BBC	32.5%	41.3%	+8.8	+	44.8%	+12.3	+
A levels BCC-CCC	19.9%	27.2%	+7.3		25.0%	+5.1	
Baccalaureate	26.6%	36.8%	+10.3		28.8%	+2.2	
BTEC high graded	11.6%	15.4%	+3.8		15.9%	+4.4	
BTEC low graded	10.7%	14.6%	+3.9		13.6%	+2.9	
Other level 3 106+	23.8%	22.4%	-1.4		23.0%	-0.8	
Other level 3 91-105	14.3%	25.7%	+11.3	+	25.6%	+11.2	+
Other level 3 1-90	17.0%	19.5%	+2.5		22.0%	+5.0	
Other level 3 w/o tariff	25.9%	30.0%	+4.1		27.1%	+1.2	
Other / no formal qualifications	29.4%	16.7%	-12.7		24.3%	-5.1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20.6%</b>	<b>25.6%</b>	<b>+5.0</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>+2.8</b>	<b>+</b>



## Our Student Profile

- 87% of our students study full time
- 51% of our students are first generation to study at University
- International students make up 23% of our undergraduates and 62% of our postgraduates
- 38% of our students are aged 21+
- 97% of our domestic students are state school educated
- 64% of our students are from a Global Majority background
- 43% of our students commute
- 55% of our domestic students come from disadvantaged backgrounds
- 10% of our domestic students have a disability or a specific learning difficulty

At the University of Westminster, we are progressive, responsible, and compassionate. We are passionate about enabling all our students, from diverse backgrounds, to achieve their true potential. This means that we will ensure that students receive the degree that accurately reflects their work, that we will work responsibly so that our students know that their degrees will hold value over time, and that we are determined to eliminate unjustified awarding gaps between different groups of students.

## Assessment and Marking Practices

Through its quality assurance process the University makes use of sector standards. When courses are validated and re-validated, panels ensure alignment to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, Subject Benchmark Statements and Qualifications Descriptors. The University requires all courses to set out clear learning outcomes for each level and requires modules to articulate how these contribute to the meeting of the course learning outcomes. Each module is required to detail assessment criteria for each assessment component. In addition, the University has developed Grading Criteria to ensure marking aligns to external reference points.

The University utilises external expertise as part of its course validation and re-validation processes. These external peers are drawn from other higher education institutions within the UK and help provide assurance that external reference points are appropriately utilised. Additionally, the University appoints a cadre of External Examiners who oversee our assessment processes. The use of this external expertise aligns to the expectations set out in the Statement of Intent.

External Examiners, as part of their role, scrutinise samples of marked work to ensure that the assessment processes are fair, and that marking is consistent with other HE providers. External Examiners also ensure modules and courses align to external reference points. A number of our External Examiners have completed the Advance HE External Examiner professional development programme.

Our Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation offers staff development sessions on assessment and marking practices throughout the academic year. Our PRESTIGE scheme linked to our Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education allows for staff to participate and gain credit for modules specifically related to assessment. All new academic staff without teaching experience or a teaching qualification are required to complete our Postgraduate Certificate as part of their induction. In addition, all academic staff receive a School level induction into marking practices and are paired with an experienced member of staff to ensure they understand and uphold the standards and practices expected at our University. Peer development schemes across the University also allow marking practices to be discussed between academics.

Schools also undertake assessment days to design and moderate assessment briefs to ensure all staff understand the assessment criteria and calibration of marking practices can be undertaken.

During the 2019-20 academic year the University transitioned from examinations to online timed assessments because of the Covid-19 pandemic. This was maintained during 2020-21. Alongside changes to the degree algorithm detailed below this reduced the attainment gap for students with disabilities and students from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.

While on-site written examinations are now able to be used again for assessment, a significant proportion of what were previously examination assessments have been moved to authentic assessments. The impact of these amendments in the long term cannot yet be assessed but the reduction of the attainment gap will continue to be considered alongside the outcomes for good degrees.

## Academic Governance

Academic Council is the supreme academic body at the University and is responsible for, *inter alia*:

- *the appointment and removal of internal and external examiners*
- *policies and procedures for assessment and examination of the academic performance of students*
- *the content of the curriculum*
- *academic standards and the validation and review of courses and*
- *the procedures for the award of qualifications*

To help Academic Council fulfil this responsibility it is supported by the Teaching Committee, which undertakes detailed scrutiny, before onward reporting, of External Examiners reports. This scrutiny allows the University to be assured that the value of qualifications is protected. The Teaching



Committee and Academic Council also consider an annual report on the institutional degree classification profile.

Teaching Committee, supported by Collaborations Committee, considers the External Examiner reports from courses delivered through a collaborative partner.

Progression and Award Boards are sub-committees of Academic Council and ensure that assessment practices are consistent and in compliance with our regulations. External Examiners provide written and verbal reports to Progression and Award Boards on our assessment and marking practices. Through the annual External Examiners overview report, Teaching Committee and Academic Council receive external assurances that assessment and marking practices are carried out in line with sector expectations.

### Classification Algorithm

[Section 17 of the University's Academic Regulations](#) sets out the classification algorithm for the award of undergraduate degrees. This section describes action that is taken with respect to borderline cases and outlines the opportunities for referrals and retakes.

In designing our degree algorithm, we considered the characteristics of our student body. Many of our students are the first in their family to participate in higher education, they undertake paid work to support their studies and often commute long distances to attend University. Our students do not always join us from traditional routes, and do not always have traditional entrance requirements.

Our degree algorithm includes marks gained at level 5 and level 6, recognising that for our students, level 4 provides an opportunity to adjust to higher education and develop their skills without the pressure of marks contributing to their final classification. The features of our degree algorithm are consistent with practice across the sector.

By double weighting level 6, we recognise the exit velocity of our students and can reflect their achievements within our algorithm. We also drop the worst 20 credits from the calculation; this allows our students to experiment with their module choices and take advantage of our interdisciplinary module offering without it impacting negatively on their performance.

Under our regulations the final aggregated degree score is rounded to the nearest integer. Boards of Examiners have no discretion to amend this score, or the resultant degree classification, as any individual student circumstance will have already been accounted for in determining the module mark. This approach therefore avoids any risk of 'double counting', eliminates any perception of favouritism or bias, and ensures consistency for all students across the University.

Our regulations permit four attempts at a module, except where required otherwise by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies. Following the publication of new guiding principles for effective algorithm design by Universities UK and GuildHE in 2020, the University has reviewed its practice and determined it aligns to all but one of the principles. The University after consideration through its governance structures agreed that it would not adopt all of the principles related to discounting. Our students have repeatedly told us that they value choice within their courses. Our approach to curriculum design and philosophy of allowing students to experiment at all levels of study is penalised when only optional modules are discounted. It means that if a student achieved a high mark in an optional module, it would be discounted rather than a worst performing core module. We think it is important to allow opportunities for experimentation across all levels of our courses

and so determined that we would continue to discount the worst-performing 20 credit module regardless of its level or core or optional status.

### Pandemic Arrangements for the Degree Classification Algorithm

Exceptional Academic Regulations were approved by Academic Council in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The award classification algorithm was changed during 2019-20 to mitigate against the adverse effects of the sudden changes to how teaching and assessments were delivered. This meant that the classifications for students in Level 6 during 2019-20 were based on the best 200 credits at level 5 and 6 rather than 220 credits. Similar measures were taken across the sector to ensure no detriment to students, this typically resulted in an increase in the proportion of Good Honours awarded.

In 2020-21, due to the ongoing pandemic, Academic Council agreed to retain for that year the amended award classification algorithm for undergraduate students. This meant that as in 2019-20, classifications for students in Level 6 during 2020-21 were based on the best 200 credits at Level 5 and 6, rather than the standard algorithm of 220 credits. Again, this was a typical measure in the sector to offset any detriment to students brought about by the pandemic landscape for learning, teaching and assessment.

In 2021-22, the amended award classification algorithm was discontinued, and awards were calculated using the standard degree algorithm.

### Teaching Practices and Learning Resources

Teaching and learning practices within Schools allow students to engage in discipline specific activities. To help engage specific groups of students, Schools offer small group assessment surgeries, alongside academic office hours appointments, to help students understand assessment criteria. Schools also encourage students to set up informal peer learning groups and we offer a mentoring scheme for students. The mentoring scheme also pairs students with alumni and employers to help students understand the benefits of assessment and how it can be related to the workplace.

Our Personal Tutoring scheme allows students to have individual conversations with academic staff about their assessments and progress across their course. Within our School of Humanities, the Personal Tutoring Scheme is embedded within a tutorial module which provides small groups of students with individualised learning and feedback opportunities. The Schools have found that this model has facilitated peer-to-peer learning, has improved attendance and has allowed for interventions to be made for at risk students.

Our Learning and Teaching Symposium provides an opportunity for good practice in assessment and marking practices to be shared across the University.

### Review and Monitoring of Student Outcomes

The University has seen an increase in its entrance qualifications over recent years, and this has resulted in a corresponding increase in the number of good honours degrees that we have awarded. As the graph below shows, this pattern holds until the 2017/18 academic year. This academic year

saw the first graduates since the University changed its degree algorithm for 2015/16 entrants, as part of a broader review of the curriculum and academic framework. When the new algorithm was introduced, the University undertook significant modelling to ensure that outcomes would not be significantly different from those produced by the previous algorithm. The University has kept the degree algorithm and the accompanying change programme ('Learning Futures') under review since its implementation.

Pre-pandemic, the University had determined that the pedagogic principles that were introduced as part of Learning Futures had maintained our academic standards and that until we had more graduating Learning Futures cohorts, we would be unable to identify further trends.

The ongoing review was then impacted by the pandemic and the subsequent introduction for 2019-20 and 2020-21 of the exceptional degree classification algorithm. This algorithm was discontinued in 2021-22; data from graduating cohorts will continue to be monitored to ensure we meet our commitment of returning to the pre-pandemic benchmark. The overview data for 2021-22 indicates that currently we are moving successfully towards our pre-pandemic benchmark, standing now at 0.7% above benchmark.

The University will continue to undertake further reviews of student outcomes pre-, during and post-pandemic and thereby gain a fuller view of the University's position in relation to student outcomes and good degrees.

Any review will take place in the context of the *Being Westminster Strategy* around learning and teaching, in particular the Authentic Assessment focus and the actions related to closing the attainment gap.

### Externality

The University utilises the external expertise of our external member of the Teaching Committee to compile this Degree Outcome Statement and to undertake review of our assessment and classification practices.

### Approval

This Degree Outcome Statement was considered and approved by the following committees prior to publication:

Teaching Committee	9 November 2022
Academic Council	7 December 2022
Court of Governors	13 December 2022

### Future Review

The University commits to reviewing and updating its Degree Outcome Statement every two years. The next version will be published by the end of the 2024 calendar year.