

Institutional degree classification profile

In 2018-19, 91% of UCL's UK-domiciled Honours Degree students were awarded First or Upper Second Class Honours (1/2.1). 40.5% were awarded a First (1) and 50.4% were awarded an Upper Second (2.1).

Over the past five years the proportion of 1/2.1 degrees reduced by -0.7 percentage points overall. The number of Firsts increased by 5.4 percentage points and the number of Upper Seconds decreased by 6.1 percentage points:

| Year | 1 | | 2.1 | | 1/2.1 | |
|-------|------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | n. | % | n. | % | n. | % |
| 18/19 | 1050 | 40.5% | 1307 | 50.4% | 2594 | 90.9% |
| 17/18 | 1063 | 40.3% | 1361 | 51.6% | 2637 | 91.9% |
| 16/17 | 1000 | 38.8% | 1393 | 54.0% | 2579 | 92.8% |
| 15/16 | 851 | 34.2% | 1414 | 56.9% | 2486 | 91.1% |
| 14/15 | 785 | 35.1% | 1263 | 56.5% | 2236 | 91.6% |

At subject level, the following proportions of 1/2.1 degrees were awarded:

| Faculty | 2014/15 | | 2018/19 | | % change |
|---|---------|-------|---------|-------|----------|
| | n. | % | n. | % | |
| Arts & Humanities | 294 | 94.6% | 385 | 96.6% | 2.1% |
| Bartlett (Built Environment) | 69 | 92.8% | 98 | 83.7% | -9.1% |
| Brain Sciences | 139 | 98.6% | 98 | 96.9% | -1.7% |
| Engineering Sciences | 237 | 87.3% | 291 | 89.7% | 2.4% |
| UCL Institute of Education | 58 | 79.3% | 90 | 82.2% | 2.9% |
| Laws | 60 | 81.7% | 74 | 93.2% | 11.6% |
| Life Sciences | 445 | 93.9% | 378 | 91.8% | -2.1% |
| Mathematical and Physical Sciences | 373 | 87.9% | 435 | 83.4% | -4.5% |
| Medical Sciences | 51 | 95.3% | 108 | 94.4% | -0.9% |
| Population Health Sciences | 65 | 96.9% | 78 | 93.6% | -3.3% |
| School of Eastern European and Slavonic Studies | 70 | 90.0% | 90 | 92.8% | 2.8% |
| Social and Historical Studies | 375 | 92.5% | 469 | 93.3% | 0.8% |

Across different student groups, the following proportions of 1/ 2.1 degrees were awarded in 2018-19:

- **By gender:** 92.2% of female students and 89.3% of male students.
- **By age group:** 91.2% of students under 20 on entry and 85.1% of students 21 and over on entry.
- **By disability:** 90.9% of students with a disability and 93.0% of students without a disability.
- **By ethnic group:** 90.2% of BAME students and 94.9% of white students.
- **By entry qualifications:** 93.6% of students entering with A levels A*AA or above and 89.6% of students entering with AAA or below (including equivalents).
- **By school type:** 89.2% of state school students and 93.8% of independent school students.
- **By local area:** 92.1% of students from lower participation areas (POLAR1-2) and 90.7% of students from higher-participation areas (POLAR3-5).
- **By degree type:** 89.2% of Bachelors students and 97.8% of Integrated Masters students.

Assessment and marking practices

The [UCL Academic Manual](#) includes all of the regulations and policies which underpin our degrees. The manual was completely restructured in 2015/16 and has since been continuously reviewed with different chapters being scrutinised each year. This has included a three-year project to review UCL's [Assessment Framework for Taught Programmes](#), and revised regulations were implemented in 2018/19. The framework defines what students need to complete and pass to [progress](#) through their programme and be awarded a degree. The [Reasonable Adjustments](#) and [Extenuating Circumstances](#) procedures support students to achieve their full potential, and there are standardised provisions for [students who fail an assessment](#). The framework sets out UCL's expectations around [marking criteria](#) and [assessment feedback](#), and promotes fair and equitable treatment for all students by ensuring that, wherever possible, student [work is assessed anonymously](#), and [Boards of Examiners](#) are conducted anonymously. Academic integrity and the security of UCL assessments are underpinned by the [Academic Misconduct Procedure](#), and students who might want to query their degree outcome are directed to the [Student Complaints Procedure](#).

Academic governance

Programmes are validated according to the [Qualifications and Credit Framework](#) and the [Programme and Module Approval and Amendment Framework](#), which align with the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) and the [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#). Each UCL programme has a [Board of Examiners](#) which is responsible for the assessment process. Students are assessed by highly-qualified [internal examiners](#), who undertake robust [marking, second-marking and internal moderation practices](#) to ensure that marks are awarded fairly and consistently. A network of [External Examiners](#) oversees the marking and moderation process, ensuring that standards are aligned with comparable institutions both in the UK and internationally. Each Programme Board of Examiners reports to a [Faculty Board of Examiners](#), which provides annual reports to UCL's Quality Review Sub Committee, which in turn reports to the central body with overall responsibility for the award of UCL's taught degrees, UCL Education Committee. Council, Academic

Board and Academic Committee represent the most senior layer of quality assurance. Departmental practices are scrutinised via the [Annual Student Experience Review \(ASER\)](#) and the periodic [Internal Quality Review](#) process. The [Academic Partnerships Framework](#) sets out how we assure standards where we work in partnership with other organisations.

Classification algorithms

In 2005/06, UCL introduced a '[Harmonised Scheme of Award](#)' bringing the majority of faculties together under a single regulatory framework with variations and derogations to accommodate disciplinary differences. In 2015/16, UCL commenced a three-year project to review the Harmonised Scheme, with the aim of further reducing variation across faculties, and new regulations were introduced for 2018/19 entrants. The majority of programmes fall under Honours Degree Classification Scheme A, which is based on a weighted mean of:

- Year 1: The credit-weighted mean of the student's best 90 credits, weighted at 1
- Year 2: The credit-weighted mean of the student's best 90 credits, weighted at 3
- Year 3: The credit-weighted mean of all 120 credits, weighted at 5.

While many institutions discount Year 1 marks (basing the classification on 240 credits), UCL prefers to include Year 1 marks to encourage students to engage fully with their studies. However our algorithm discounts the lowest 30 credits in both Years 1 and 2, resulting in a classification based on 300 credits. Honours Classification Schemes B and C are designed to meet the requirements of certain Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies and are primarily used in Engineering, Mathematical and Physical Sciences, Pharmacy and Laws. There are also variations within each scheme for sandwich programmes, Integrated Masters degrees and programmes delivered in partnership. All schemes include the same provisions for [borderline marks](#), which have recently been standardised to promote parity for all students. Students are permitted [two attempts at assessment](#) and there is provision for [condonement](#) where specific criteria are met. In response to student feedback, UCL offered late summer assessments for the first time in 2017-18, and marks for modules passed at the second attempt are now capped at the pass mark.

Teaching practices and learning resources

Using UCL's [Education Strategy](#) as our road map we aim to create a framework for the improvement of teaching and learning which promotes our core value of research-based education which benefits the entire university. Current improvement projects include [personal tutoring](#), [assessment and feedback](#), [Transforming Experience For Students Through Assessment](#) (TESTA), our [academic careers framework](#), the [Introductory Programme](#) and a new online [Module Catalogue](#). Learning is also enhanced via extra-curricular programmes such as the [Writing Lab](#), [Global Citizenship programme](#), and [UCL ChangeMakers](#). Since 2014 [UCL Arena](#), our professional development pathway for teaching accredited by the Higher Education Academy, has awarded 1435 HEA fellowships, including 21 Principal Fellows, 169 Senior Fellows, 600 Fellows and 645 Associate Fellows. Our new [Leading Change in Education](#) professional development programme has so far developed 20 senior leaders. Departments are further supported via our [Teaching and Learning Portal](#) of resources and teaching toolkits. We monitor our progress through the recently-refreshed [Annual Student Experience Review \(ASER\)](#) (ASER), the [National Student Survey \(NSS\)](#) and [Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey \(PTES\)](#), and the [Teaching Excellence Framework \(TEF\)](#).

Identifying good practice and actions

We are pleased to be able to report positive outcomes with regards to gender, with female students outperforming male students, and students from areas with lower rates of participation in Higher Education have outperformed students from higher-participation areas.

UCL has undertaken extensive work to reduce the number of separate degree classification algorithms and minimise the number of discretionary regulations which might risk unconscious bias in decision-making. The new classification regulations come into force for 2020/21 graduates and modelling indicates that this will help to reduce the variability currently seen across faculties. The new regulations are based on extensive data modelling and consultation with the UCL community of students and staff, as well as research into practices at comparator institutions and discussion with

Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies. The final system was deliberately chosen to maintain, as far as possible, UCL's current proportion of 1/2.1, but will be monitored closely and reviewed in light of the anticipated guidance from UUK, to ensure alignment with sector expectations.

Risks and challenges

UCL monitors attainment rates at institution, faculty and department levels, and takes deliberate steps to address awarding gaps. For example, there is a small but statistically significant difference in the rate of good degrees achieved by UCL's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students compared with white students. UCL has prioritised action in this area and was the only Russell Group institution to take part in a [consortium project led by Kingston University and funded by the Office for Students](#) which used a value-added metric and an inclusive curriculum framework to address the BAME awarding gap. This is now embedded in a [new toolkit for staff](#) which supports UCL's commitment to eliminating the BAME awarding gap by 2024.

Our overall rate of 1/2.1 is high compared to the sector as a whole, but is in line with our high entry requirements (A*AA) which attract the most able students. It is also in part due to UCL's stringent progression requirements. We have recently introduced revised regulations which, our modelling indicates, should permit slightly more students to progress to the final year, but may lead to more Lower Second and Third class honours and help to address the increase in Firsts that we have seen. Although there is a higher rate of 1/2.1 on our Integrated Masters programmes, these students must meet a 2.1 threshold to be eligible for entry to the Masters degree. There is more variability at faculty level, which the new classification algorithms are intended to address. Our intercalated degrees are undertaken as an adjunct by our medical students, and account for higher attainment rates in the faculties of Medical Sciences and Population Health Sciences. The Faculty of Laws has seen a significant increase in the rate of 1/2.1, coinciding with a particular effort in recent years to use the full range of marks, which has been encouraged by their External Examiner, and which has brought them up to a level more comparable with the rest of the institution.