Honours Degree Outcomes
Statement 2019/20

Institutional degree classification profile

Year	1		2.1		1 + 2.1	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
19/20	1524	59.0%	976	37.8%	2583	96.8%
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%

In 2019-20, 96.8% of UCL's UK-domiciled Honours Degree students were awarded First or Upper Second Class Honours (1/2.1). 59.0% were awarded a First (1) and 37.8% were awarded an Upper Second (2.1). The proportion of 1/2.1 degrees has increased by 5.7 percentage points above 2015/16 levels - the number of Firsts has increased by 24.8 percentage points and the number of Upper Seconds has decreased by 19.1 percentage points. There was a marked increase between 2018/19 and 2019/20 - see 'Covid-19' below for further detail.

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

Faculty	2015/16		2019/20		% change
	n	%	n	%	
Arts & Humanities	353	97.2%	373	97.6%	0.4%
Bartlett (Built Environment)	57	85.1%	95	92.2%	7.2%
Brain Sciences	128	97.0%	102	100.0%	3.0%
Engineering Sciences	201	83.4%	297	91.4%	8.0%
UCL Institute of Education	85	70.8%	80	95.2%	24.4%
Laws	65	91.5%	72	98.6%	7.1%
Life Sciences	386	91.7%	345	98.6%	6.9%
Mathematical & Physical Sciences	344	89.4%	379	96.9%	7.6%
Medical Sciences	50	98.0%	128	96.2%	-1.8%
Population Health Sciences	58	96.7%	94	98.9%	2.3%
School of Eastern European & Slavonic Studies	92	94.8%	75	97.4%	2.6%
Social & Historical Studies	446	93.3%	460	98.3%	5.0%

Across different student groups, the following proportions of 1/ 2.1 degrees were awarded in 2019-20:

- **By gender:** 97.9% of female students and 95.6% of male students.
- **By age group:** 92.4% of students aged 21 and over on entry and 97.0% of students aged under 21 on entry.
- **By disability:** 98.0% of students with a disability and 97.3% of students without a disability.
- **By ethnic group:** 97.2% of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students and 98.6% of White students.
- **By entry qualifications:** 96.4% of students entering with A levels AAA or below and 98.0% of students entering with A*AA or above (including equivalent qualifications).
- **By school type:** 96.5% of state school students and 98.2% of independent school students.
- **By local area:** 96.1% of students from lower participation areas (POLAR1-2) and 96.9% of students from higher-participation areas (POLAR3-5).
- **By degree type:** 96.4% of Bachelors students and 98.7% of Integrated Masters students.

Assessment and marking practices

The UCL Academic Manual includes all of the regulations and policies which underpin our degrees. Completely restructured in 2015/16, it has since been continuously reviewed 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 have created 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](#), [AssessmentUCL](#), our [academic careers framework](#), the [Introductory Programme](#) and a new online [Module Catalogue](#). Learning is also enhanced via extra-curricular programmes such as those provided through the [Academic Communication Centre](#) and [UCL ChangeMakers](#). Since 2014 [UCL Arena](#), our professional development pathway for teaching accredited by AdvanceHE, has awarded 1,932 HEA fellowships, including 27 Principal Fellows, 210 Senior Fellows, 826 Fellows and 869 Associate Fellows. Our [Leading Change in Education](#) professional development programme is now in its third year, developing between 15-20 senior education leaders per year. Departments are further supported via our [Teaching and Learning Portal](#) of resources and teaching toolkits. We monitor our progress through the [Annual Student Experience Review (ASER)](#), the [National Student Survey (NSS) and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)](#).

Identifying good practice and actions

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. New regulations were introduced in 2018/19 and were 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 first cohort of three-year Bachelors students is due to graduate in 2020/21.

There is a 7 percentage point difference in the rate of first class degrees achieved by UCL's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students compared with white students from the UK, which is statistically significant. UCL has prioritised action in this area, appointing a network of BAME Leads in every faculty, and developing an inclusive curriculum framework (now embedded in a [new](#) [toolkit for staff](#)) to address UCL's commitment to eliminating the BAME awarding gap by 2024. UCL is working closely with students and staff to achieve this aim. The move to online and diversified assessment, accelerated by the necessary Covid response, has reduced the gap in some instances. Each Faculty is now working to review this structure at module and programme level to make the recommended changes.

Risks and challenges

Covid-19

Assessments taken in 2019/20 were severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. UCL followed the "No Detriment" approach to classification recommended by the UK Office for Students and adopted by a wide range of Russell Group universities. No Detriment aimed to ensure that no UCL student would be academically disadvantaged by the emergency changes to assessments and teaching that we needed to put in place, including rapidly moving all teaching and assessment online. Students were very concerned that these unfamiliar assessments would lead to lower module marks. In order to reassure students, UCL agreed to use only the best 50% of any assessments taken in the 2019/20 academic session for classification purposes, unless this would disadvantage the student.

In the three years preceding the pandemic, the proportion of Firsts at UCL was stable at approximately 40%. Whilst this was high compared to the sector as a whole, it was in line with UCL's high entry standards (A*AA) which attract the most able students. In 2019-20, the proportion of Firsts increased to 59.0%. Our analysis shows that this was primarily due to No Detriment - the anticipated reduction in individual module marks did not materialise, and this meant that the changes to classification algorithms over-compensated. This increase is of concern to UCL, and Education Committee has agreed that a sub-group will undertake further in-depth work to understand all contributory factors. As part of this work, we will be considering comments raised by External Examiners for individual programmes as well as differences in outcomes at discipline level.

End notes

1. The OfS data is taken from the annual HESA Individualised Student Returns. We have recreated the data which OfS hold for 2014/15 to 2017/18 and have added the equivalent data for 2018/19 and 2019/20.

2. The criteria for inclusion in the OfS data are as follows:
   • Level 6 UG awards (BSc, BA, BEng etc.) are included
   • Level 7 UG awards (MSci, MEng, MPharm etc.) are included.
   • MBBS awards are excluded as these do not carry an honours classification.
   • Intercalated/integrated (iBSc) awards to students on the MBBS are included.
   • Only UK-domiciled students are included (this excludes about 50% of the UCL UG graduating body).
   • Only students graduating as full-time are included (this excludes about 0.2% of the UCL student body).

3. The UKSCQA guidance suggests that statements cover Level 6 awards, but the OfS data include Level 6 and UG Level 7 awards. We have included both Level 6 and UG Level 7 in our data as UCL has a high proportion of integrated masters students (around 18% of the UG Awards made by UCL).

4. The following should be noted when considering the analyses by student characteristic and subject:
   • Awards are adjusted to the faculty the students would be in as at 2019/20.
   • Data for students whose gender is recorded as 'unknown' or 'other' is excluded as the sample size is too small to be reported on.
   • Entry qualifications are based on the best three grades, excluding General Studies and Critical Thinking.
   • POLAR 1 is the 20% of areas which have the lowest participation rates in HE; POLAR 5 has the highest rates. Normally we would consider POLAR 1 & 2 to be the low participation areas.

5. The UKSCQA guidance asks for data to be presented according to the OfS' 'full model' i.e. the data used in UCL's statement are not adjusted for 'explained' variables such as gender, entry qualifications etc.