Arts University Plymouth

**Degree Outcomes Statement**

October 2024

1. Institutional Degree Classification Profile

Arts University Plymouth was awarded University Title in May 2022, following the award of Taught Degree Awarding Powers in March 2019.

Previous to this, the University's degree programmes were validated and awarded by the Open University. The degree classification profile shown below covers Academic Years 2018/19 to 2023/24 .

All %							
Year	First / Second Upper	First	Second Upper	Second Lower	Third	Non-Hons	Fail
2018/19	60%	18%	42%	31%	8%	2%	0%
2019/20	69%	22%	47%	23%	5%	0%	2%
2020/21	73%	30%	43%	24%	3%	0%	0%
2021/22	69%	25%	44%	25%	6%	0%	0%
2022/23	68%	25%	44%	24%	8%	0%	0%
2023/24	64%	23%	41%	27%	9%	1%	0%
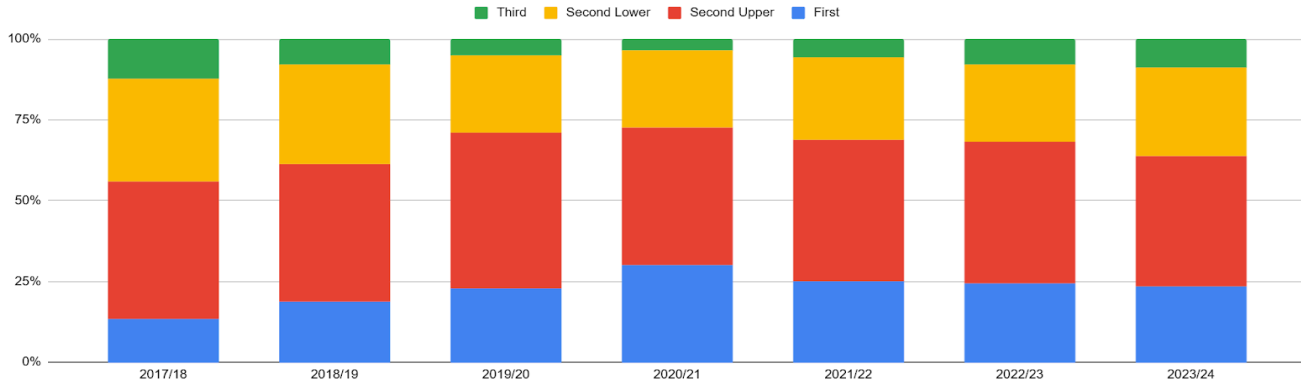
1. This data is presented at Institutional Level, as it provides a clear overview of student performance over the last five years, and is not skewed by changes in the curriculum offer or small cohorts on some programmes.
2. The University monitors degree classifications by gender, age, ethnicity, entry profile, these data are available on request.
3. The University reports on the achievement of 'good' degrees, those achieving 1st or 2.1, for monitoring purposes and the trends over the last 5 years show a consistent performance, noting a decrease in the number of good degrees to 64%, after 68% in 2022/23.

The University recognises that the level of awards, designated as good degrees (1st & 2.1) made continues to be lower than the national average with latest published data being 77% (a drop from 78 from the previous year), however these results reflect the demographic of the students recruited by the University, and for those who graduated in 2023/24, they would have still been impacted by the pandemic to some extent.

The University returned to the recognised methodology for degree calculations, removing the no-detriment arrangements brought in to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on achievement. The methodology calculates degree outcomes based on one third of level 5 grades and two thirds of level 6 grades.

The 2023/24 graduating cohort are also the first to have completed their studies following the University's Undergraduate Common Unit Framework. We will use the completion data for this cohort as part of the Periodic Review planned for the current academic year, to identify any trends that may influence the outcome of the review.

As identified throughout the Higher Education sector, there continues to be an increase in the number of students with wellbeing and mental health concerns, which are actively supported by the University. We continue to receive a significant number of extenuating circumstances claims related to these issues. Enhancement to the process for this year aim to provide support to students to meet deadlines, to reduce the pressure that often comes from extended deadlines and adding to workload at key points.

Input from Subject External Examiners comprehensively endorses assessment decisions and the University is proud of how this reflects the rigour involved in its assessment procedures. The University also has a Chief External Examiner in post, overseeing the work of all Subject Examiners across the University provision, this provides additional assurance of standards across both Undergraduate and Postgraduate study.

2. Assessment and Marking Practices

The University has in place a set of procedures that govern the assessment and marking process, and these are promulgated to both staff and students for transparency. These procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure alignment with sector reference points, including those set by QAA and OfS, FHEQ, such as the FHEQ and subject benchmark statements. An annual programme of staff development is in place to ensure engagement with the procedures, including full induction for all new teaching staff.

Appropriateness of assessment related to course and learning outcomes have been reviewed through validation and revalidation activity, and will be a key focus of periodic review activity.

Students are provided with detailed course documentation to refer to including the course specification, unit handbook, and detailed unit guides which clarify the assessment tasks required and how these will be graded.

Many AUP staff are External Examiners at other HEIs around the UK and abroad, and staff have been supported to complete the Advance HE External Examiner professional development course.

The University has a standard 'grading matrix' in place for all undergraduate and postgraduate courses to ensure there is a consistent approach to marking across all disciplines. A revised undergraduate matrix was piloted across all levels of Undergraduate study in 2022/23, and staff and students were also consulted on its format. The matrix was approved by Academic Board and was used in assessments for the 2023/24 academic year.

3. Academic Governance

The University's Board of Governors are responsible for corporate governance which includes the leadership, direction and control of the University, with the aim of improving the efficiency and effectiveness within the organisation through the relationship with management and the organisation stakeholders. This includes oversight of all academic delivery and related standards.

Academic Board is the University's senior academic committee, which manages its business through a series of sub-committees, with responsibility for academic regulations; assessment and moderation practice; curriculum development; academic standards; validation, revalidation and periodic review.

Strong communication between Academic Board and the Board of Governors is essential, and this is enhanced by the Vice-Chancellor & Chief Executive who chairs Academic Board and also sits on the Board of Governors, and also by the University Registrar & Deputy Vice-Chancellor who attends all meetings of the Board of Governors.

Academic performance reports including the outcomes from the annual monitoring process are routinely submitted to the Board of Governors, providing a comprehensive basis for their oversight and assurance of standards.

4. Classification algorithms

As stated previously, the University was awarded Taught Degree Awarding Powers in March 2019. Prior to this point awards made were validated by the Open University, and as such were subject to the academic regulations laid down by the OU. There is, and has always been, one algorithm in place for all undergraduate courses.

For the Academic Years 2018-19, 2017-18 the algorithm was as follows:

- An average of grades across all modules in Level 5 (120 credits) and Level 6 (120 credits) weighted 1/3 Level 5 and 2/3 Level 6.
  (for students studying at Level 6 only, the final grade is based on Level 6 performance only)

As part of the no detriment measures introduced by the University during the COVID19 Pandemic adjustments were made to the classification algorithm to support students whose achievement may have been negatively affected by a prolonged period of lockdown events.

For the Academic Year 2019-20 there were 2 algorithms applied for each student, awarding the most favourable in every case:

Method 1: The normal University regulation - An aggregate of grades across all modules in Level 5 (120 credits) and level 6 (120 credits) weighted 30% Level 5 and 70% Level 6.

Method 2: An aggregate of grades across all modules in Level 5 (120 credits) and modules 301/304 in Level 6 (60 credits) weighted 30% Level 5 and 70% Level 6.

For the Academic Years 2021-22 and 2020-21 there were 2 algorithms applied for each student, awarding the most favourable in every case:

Method 1: The normal University regulation - An aggregate of grades across all modules in Level 5 (120 credits) and level 6 (120 credits) weighted 30% Level 5 and 70% Level 6.

Method 2: An aggregate of grades across all modules in Level 6 only (120 credits)

The algorithm used in 2021-22 remained in place for students due to graduate in 2022-23, to mitigate against the impact of the pandemic on their studies at Levels 4.

In 2023-24 the University returned to the standard algorithm for graduating students - An aggregate of grades across all modules in Level 5 (120 credits) and level 6 (120 credits) weighted 30% Level 5 and 70% Level 6.

The University continues to monitor sector guidance regarding degree algorithms, and we are also engaged in the work being undertaken by UUK and QAA with regards to algorithm design.

5. Teaching practices and learning resources

The University is fully committed to the continuous improvement of quality provision

and student achievement and can demonstrate this through a range of activities. A fundamental part of this activity is the Annual Monitoring process, supported by comprehensive performance data including attendance, retention, achievement and progression to professional employment and/or further study. Significant emphasis is placed on student feedback, with Trimester Surveys taking place at all levels that collect general feedback on student experience alongside unit specific commentary; Trimester Survey results are clearly evidenced in Annual Monitoring. The University engages fully with and responds honestly and promptly to External Examiner Reports. Oversight of this activity and output by Academic Standards and Quality Committee has been improved, supporting greater oversight by Academic Board and consequent assurance on behalf of the Board of Governors regarding the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and of student outcomes.

Through workshops and other training events including those led by external facilitators held over the past 5 years, debate among staff regarding best and shared practice has increased significantly. Output has included improvement in the format of unit briefs and a greater focus on compliance with regulations and transparency for assessment and guidelines for tutorials. Alongside this activity is an annual moderation event for Level 6 work across the curriculum to ensure parity of approach across all courses. The University also has in place a range of mechanisms for peer review amongst colleagues that is designed to support staff development and identify areas of good practice that can be shared across the Institution.

6. Identifying good practice and actions

The University has identified a range of actions as part of its continual drive to improve the student experience and levels of attainment:

1. Introduction of 'common unit framework' across all Postgraduate provision in 2024/25.
2. A revised grading matrix for Postgraduate provision.
3. A programme of staff development to ensure consistency of practice across all disciplines and levels of study; support for staff to undertake External Examiner training (Advance HE) and to take up External Examiner roles in other institutions.
4. Ongoing review of degree algorithms to ensure suitability as the curriculum offering develops.