

Degree Outcomes Statement December 2023

Institutional Degree Classification Profile¹

In this statement, we provide an analysis of both Office for Students (OfS) and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data for Good Honours Degrees (2:1 and 1st) and first-class degrees.

The following graph/table (figure 1) shows the OfS published data for Good Honours Degrees and first-class degrees² over the period 2010-11 to 2021-22. In 2020-21 UCLan's rate of good honours degrees was 68.4%, which was 11.2% lower than the sector average of 79.6%. In relation to first class degrees, UCLan's rate was 29.1%, which was 3.7% lower than the sector average of 37.9%.

These rates were also lower than 2020-21; with good honours rates for UCLan falling back to 68.4% (a fall of 5.8%), mirrored by a drop in first-class degrees to 29.1% (down 4.4%). This trend is shared by the sector, albeit less pronounced, dropping 4.1% for good honours, and 4.6% for firsts only.

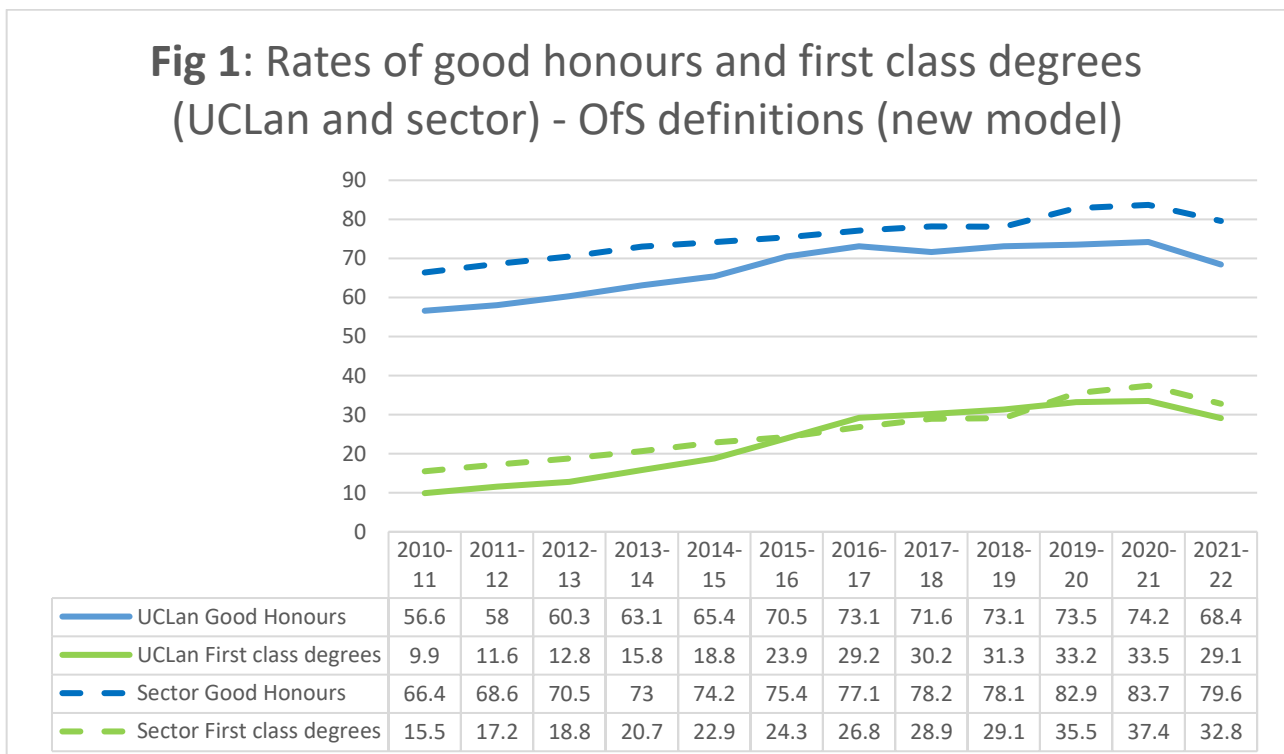


Fig 1. Rates of good honours and first-class degrees (UCLan and sector) - OfS definitions (new model)

Note:

- (1) The graph contains data based on the OfS new methodology. As a result, the data presented may differ from the data presented in the 2022 Degree Outcomes statement.

¹ Our internal data understanding of degree attainment within this statement, relates to the methodology outlined by the Office for Students in 2022. We have considered the newly defined methodology presented by the OfS this year, however value a consistent approach in analysing trends year on year, in which to support efforts to ensure consistent levels of grade attainment over time.

² The OfS data includes attainment of UK students who were studying full-time only.

The following graph/table (figure 2) shows the externally published HESA data for Good Honours Degrees and first-class degrees³ over the period 2014-15 to 2021-22. In 2021-22 UCLan's rate of good honours degrees was 67%, which was 8% lower than the sector average of 75%. In relation to first class degrees, UCLan's rate was 28%, which was 4% lower than the sector average of 32%.

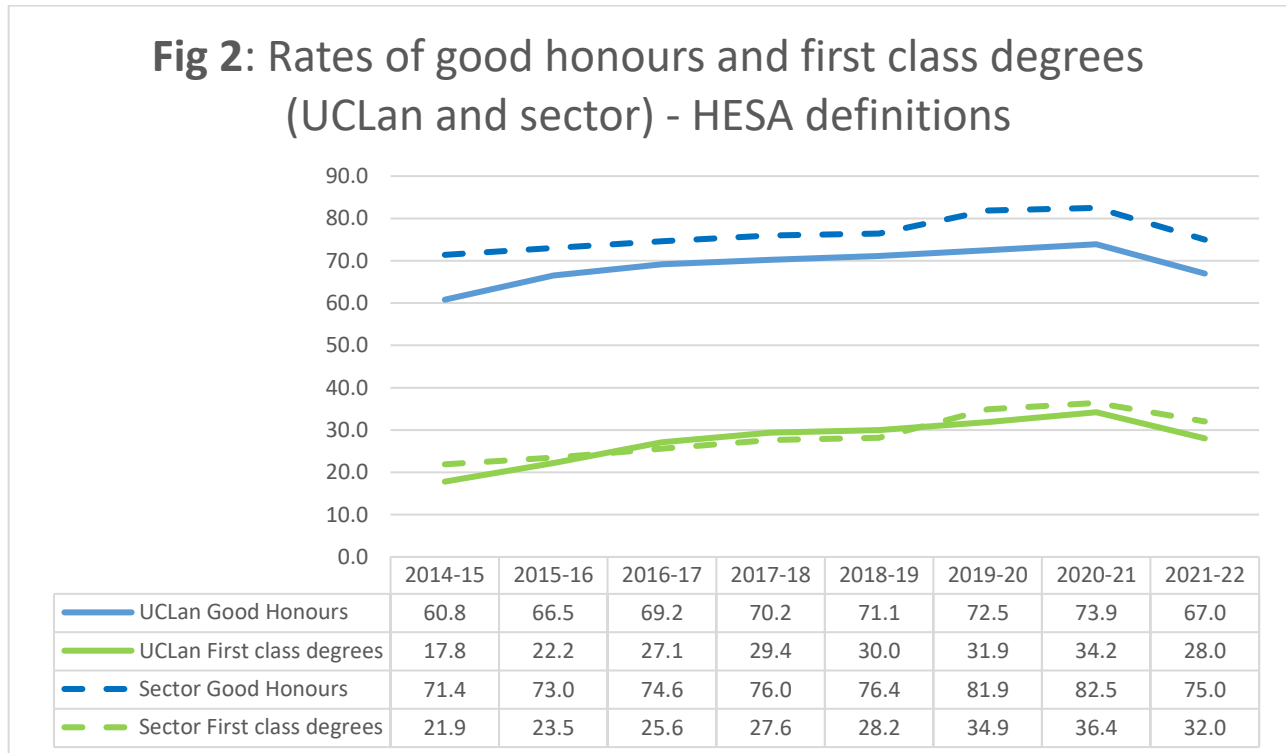


Fig 2. Rates of good honours and first class degrees (UCLan and sector) - HESA definitions

UCLan has a very diverse student population and considers itself to be a widening participation focused Institution. In line with the OFS requirements, we have in place an Access and Participation Plan <https://www.uclan.ac.uk/values-and-initiatives/widening-participation/access-participation-plan> which focuses on actions intended to address differential gaps in student outcomes with the aim of eliminating or significantly reducing such gaps through targeted measures and support.

The University is committed to ensuring that all students, regardless of their ethnicity, sex, background or disability are supported to achieve their best possible outcomes during their studies.

³ HESA data includes attainment of students who were studying on all modes of study, and from all domiciles.

Attainment by POLAR quintile⁴

Considering our internal reports, the following graph plots our good honours rate by POLAR (Participation of local areas) quintile; 1 being a local area with low HE participation, 5 with the highest. Data relates as close as we can replicate to the data definitions used by the OfS.

The following graph (figure 4)/table 1 shows that the good honours rate has been relatively steady for students arriving from Polar Q5, Q4 & Q2 since 2018-19, but fell in 2021-22 which is consistent with the overall fall in % of good honours degrees.

For Polar Q1, after a positive incline for students hailing from Q1 since 2018-19 it has fallen back in 2021-22 to 65.6%. Whilst rates of good honours has decreased across every Polar quintile group, the drop for Polar Q1 is greater. This group of graduates makes up 14% of our graduating cohort in 2021-22.)

Further work is needed to understand the attainment gaps within Polar Quintiles and the differences in levels overall.

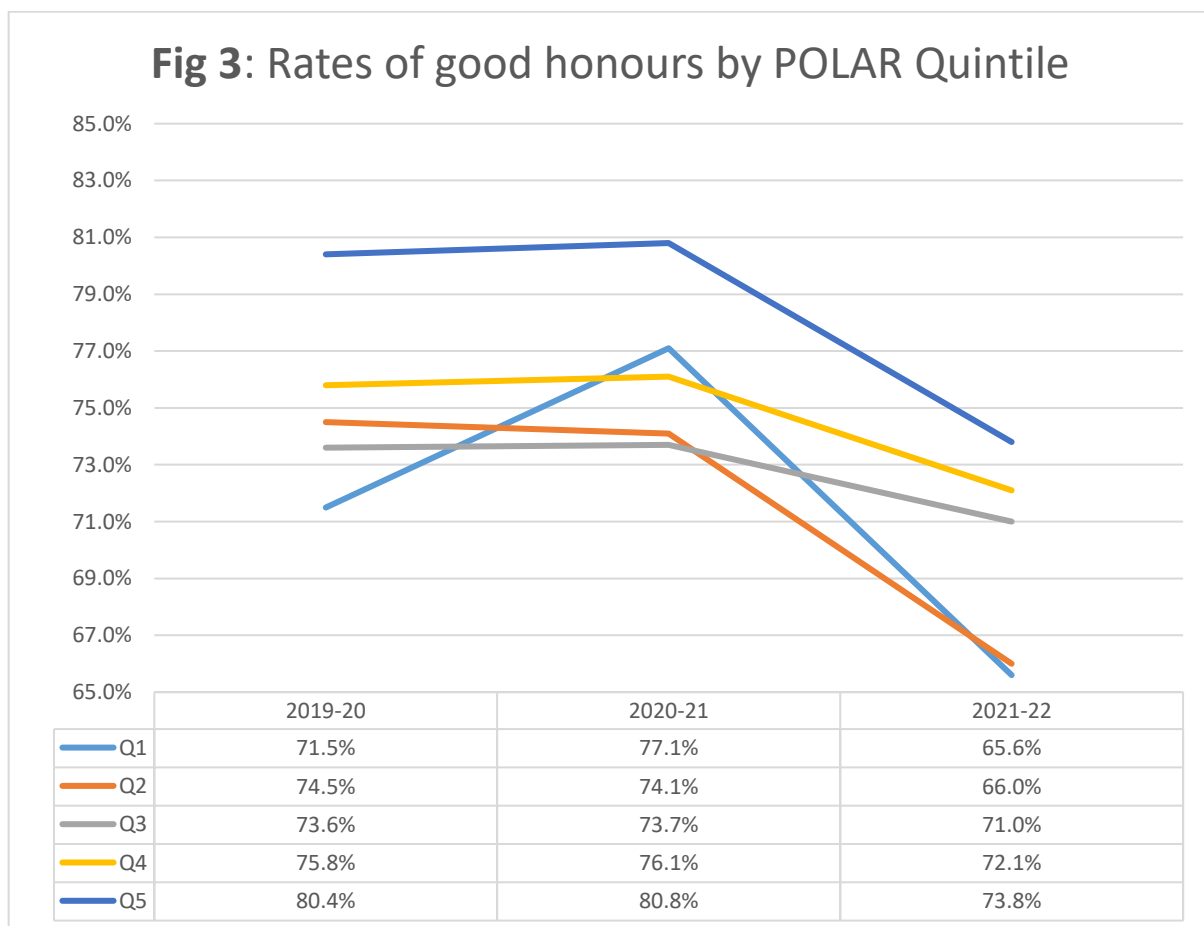
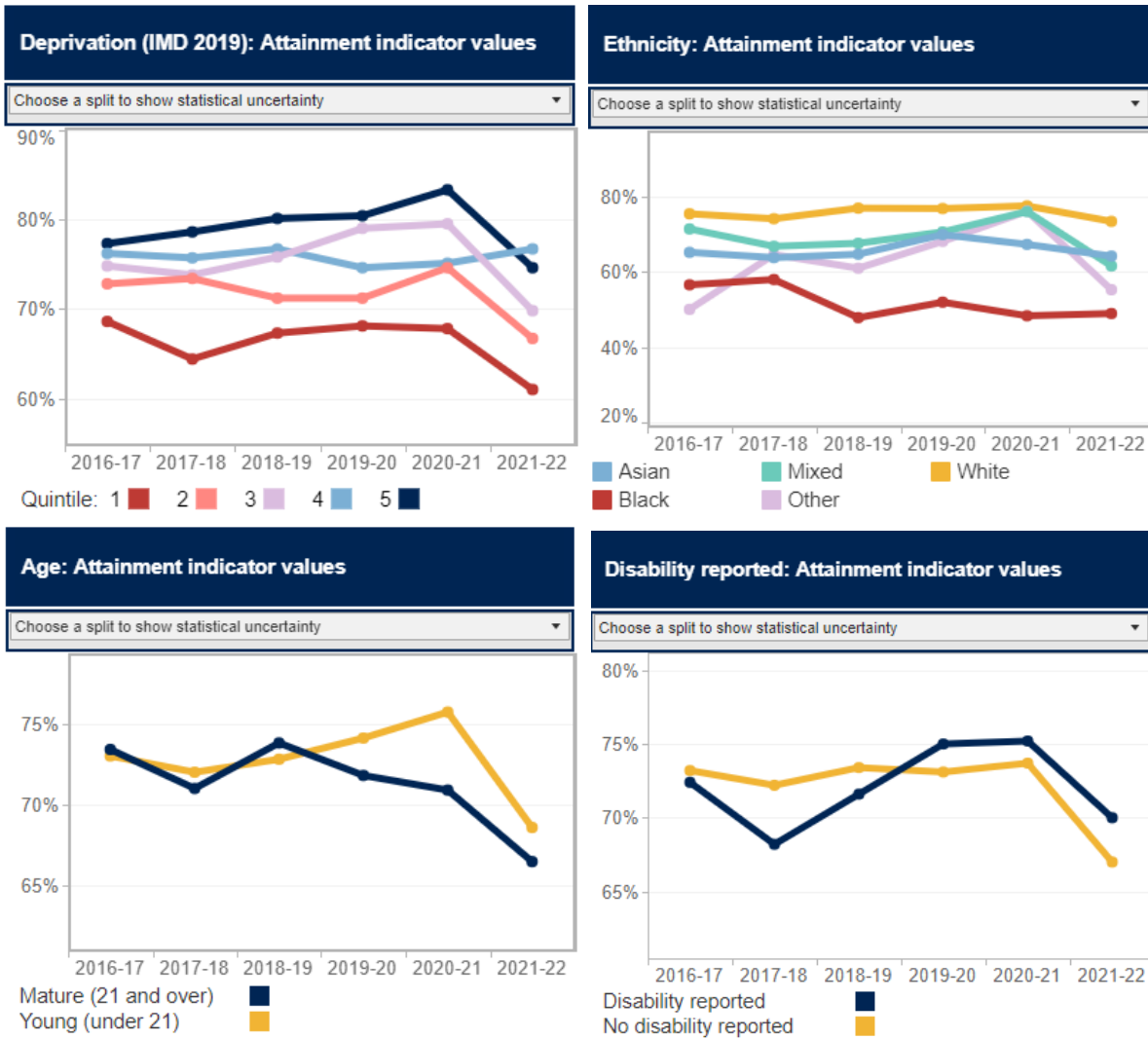


Fig 3. Good Honours (1st & 2:1s) by POLAR quintile

⁴ POLAR classifies local areas into five groups - or quintiles - **based on the proportion of young people who enter higher education aged 18 or 19 years old**. Quintile one shows the lowest rate of participation. Quintile five shows the highest rate of participation.

Student demographics (UCLan)

The following graphs are taken directly from the OfS' APP dashboard and illustrate the differences in good honours rates by student demographic.



Mature students-Young students: attainment has fallen back across both mature and young students in the period from 2020-21 to 2021-22, which is consistent with the institutional picture. This drop however has been more exaggerated and therefore the gap in attainment between mature and young students has narrowed from a circa 10% to circa 3% difference.

Disability to no disability reported: attainment has fallen back from 2020-21 to 2021-22 which is consistent with the institutional picture. However, in this group of students, the attainment of students with a disability reported remain higher than a student with no disability reported.

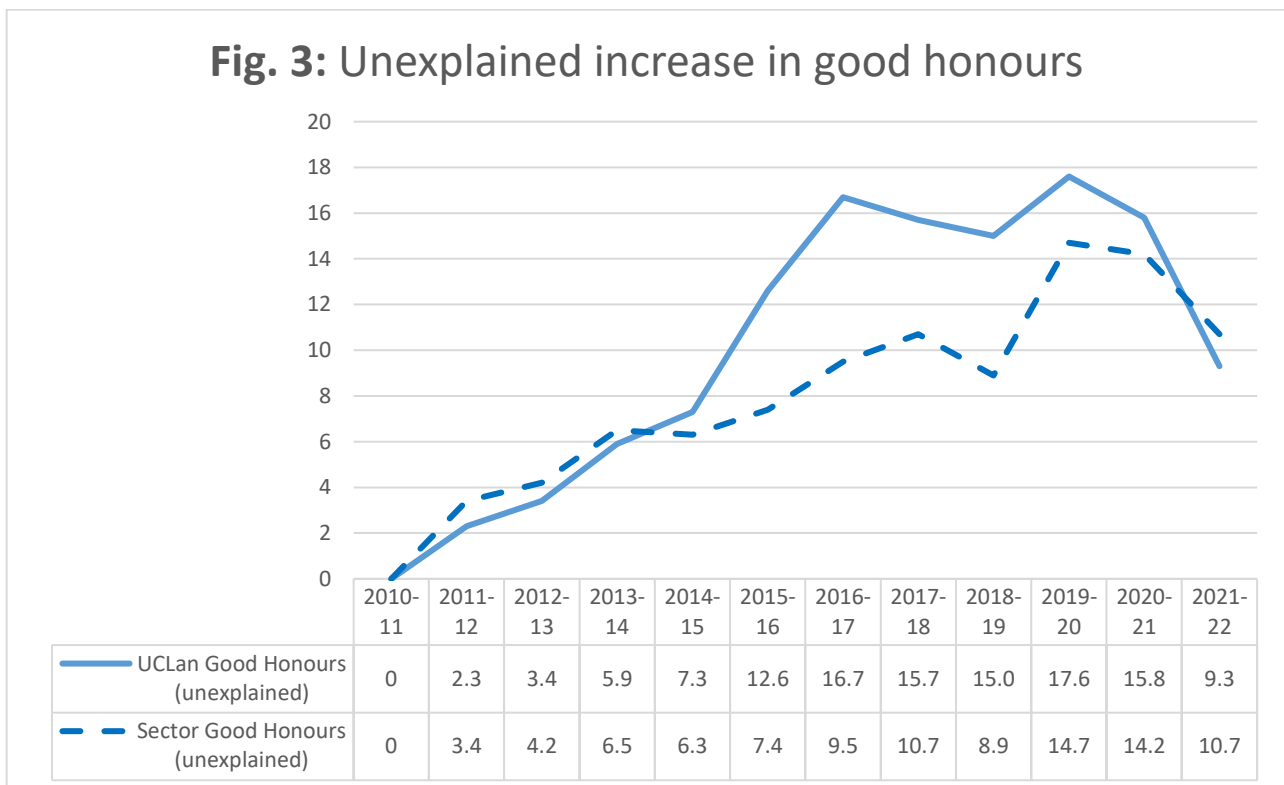
Ethnicity profile: attainment across all ethnic groups has fallen back from 2020-21 to 2021-22 which is consistent with the institutional picture. There is however a varying picture across the different groups:

- Attainment for Black students has remained consistent.
- Attainment for white students has dropped slightly.
- The largest decrease was in the mixed and other ethnic group.

Unexplained Attainment at UCLan

Figure 3 shows the University's yearly rates of unexplained variance for first class degrees and for good honours (compared to the sector baseline of 2010-11). The University's rate of unexplained attainment has been higher than the sector average since 2014-15 for good honours and for first class degrees. This is however, against a background of below sector average levels of good honours.

In common with the sector, UCLAN has been investing significantly in supporting delivery of teaching, learning and assessment, improving pedagogy and student support to support student attainment and success.



Note:

(2) The graph contains data based on the OFS new methodology. As a result, the data presented may differ from the data presented in the 2022 Degree Outcomes statement.

Table 4: OFS	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
UCLan	15.0%	17.6% (+2.6%)	15.8% (-1.8%)	9.3% (-6.5%)
Sector	8.9%	14.7% (+5.8%)	14.2% (-0.5%)	10.7% (-3.5%)

Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on Institutional Degree Classification Profile

No changes were made to the University degree classification algorithm as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the academic years 2019-20 and 2020-21, the increase in good honours degrees was around +1% each year (2% overall), which is significantly lower than the sector average of over 6% overall (see table 1 and 2 below). In 2021-22, the numbers of good honours fell back to just above levels in 2014-15 at circa 68%, which brings UCLANs classifications back to pre-pandemic levels.

Table 5: OFS⁵	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
UCLan	73.1%	73.5% (+0.4%)	74.2% (+0.7%)	68.4% (-5.8%)
Sector	78.1%	82.9% (+4.8%)	83.7% (+0.8%)	79.6% (-4.1%)

Table 6: HESA⁶	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
UCLan	71.1%	72.5% (+1.4%)	73.9% (+1.4%)	67% (-6.9%)
Sector	76.4%	81.9% (+5.5%)	82.5% (+0.6%)	75% (-7.5%)

Assessment and Marking Practices

The University has in place a well-established regulatory framework and an Academic Quality Manual (AQA), both of which are approved through academic governance as described below. These are both mapped against sector requirements and expectations including the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, National Credit Frameworks, Subject Benchmark Statements, Apprenticeship Standards, and the requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies. These frameworks are also mapped to the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education and the Office for Students Conditions of Registration.

Assessment is regulated by the Academic Regulations; [academic regulations 2122 \(1\) \(uclan.ac.uk\)](#) This is supplemented by Guidance on Assessment which is part of the AQA Manual ([AQA App16 Staff Guidance on Assessment.docx \(sharepoint.com\)](#)). This document is a practical guide to assist academic and other staff engaged in the assessment of students at the University or at its partner institutions. It is intended to promote best practice across the University. The guidance covers many aspects of assessment practice and is intended to act as a key reference document for University policies relating to assessment including marking, moderating and verifying assessment. It is written at a general University level and therefore does not stand in isolation from faculty or subject-level policies and strategies which it complements nor, for partner institutions, their own specific policies and regulations.

Adherence to the Assessment Regulations is assured through Course Assessment Boards, operating under delegated authority from Academic Board and chaired by senior academic staff who undertake regular training in relation to the operation and chairing of assessment boards.

The University currently employs circa 420 External Examiners for taught programmes (including many with responsibility for programmes delivered by partners). External Examiners ensure institutional and subject level maintenance of threshold academic standards and student

⁵ The OfS data includes attainment of UK students who were studying full-time only.

⁶ HESA data includes attainment of students who were studying on all modes of study, and from all domiciles.

outcomes as well as providing external oversight of verification and moderation processes, ensuring that student marks are applied consistently and at the appropriate level.

UCLan also has an Institutional External Examiner whose role is to comment on the University's Annual Overview Report on themes and issues arising from external examiners' reports; to advise the University on issues pertaining to the operation of the external examiner system at the University; to advise the University in relation to issues involving and arising from applicability of its Academic Regulations (including Section K - Extraordinary Circumstances); and to submit a written report annually on duties undertaken during the year, including issues, concerns and good practice. This role provides an extra layer of scrutiny in relation to the efficiency and effectiveness of our internal processes.

The University supports the professional development of academic staff including activities such as staff development, engagement in subject/discipline specific networks, research, and scholarship and through acting as External Examiners at other Institutions. The Centre for Collaborative Learning is our focus for staff support and development around teaching and learning bringing together Academic, Digital Learning, Pedagogic and Research expertise.

Academic Governance

The University's Academic Board, chaired by the University Vice Chancellor, retains ultimate oversight and accountability reporting to University Board. Academic Board fulfils its responsibilities through a number of standing committees approved under the Scheme of Academic Governance. This enables Academic Board and its committees to:

- a) Focus on the core academic strategies and the responsibilities conferred to it by the Articles of Government; and
- b) Be assured that policies and strategies are being properly implemented and monitored effectively (including partnership arrangements)

The Academic Quality and Standards Committee has primary responsibility for changes to the Academic Regulations, approval and monitoring of policies contained within the Academic Quality Assurance Manual and for the student contract. The responsibilities of each committee has been mapped to the applicable Office for Students Conditions of Registration and mapped to the priorities within applicable sub strategies of the University Strategic Plan. In addition to its committees, the Academic Board has delegated authority for:

- **Course Assessment Boards**, for the assessment of students in accordance with the Assessment Regulations and the recommendation of the conferment of an award upon a student who, in the judgement of the Assessment Board, has fulfilled the objectives of the approved programme of study and achieved the standard required for the award. The Course Assessment Board works to approved procedures and protocols detailed in the Academic Regulations and Assessment guidance.
- **University Review Panels**, for the approval and review of courses, working to approved procedures detailed in Appendix 2 of the AQA Manual (The Course Approval Process) and the Academic Regulations.
- **Academic Appeal Panels** to consider second stage student appeals against assessment board decisions working to approved procedures outlined in the Academic Regulations and the Assessment guidance.
- **Research Degree Board** to approve Transfers from MPhil to PhD and the arrangements for the examination of research students, authorise interruptions to study and extensions to registration periods, confer research degrees, confirm Annual Assessment of Progress

recommendations, and monitor research students' academic progression, student engagement, and completion.

- **Ethics Review Panel** to consider research proposals operating in accordance with the University's Code of Conduct for Research proposals, agreed University procedures and professional bodies and society requirements

Classification Algorithm

The classification of awards for Honours Degrees is based on the highest classification outcome from one of the following:

1. The APM based on a weighted average of the best 100 credits at Level 6 and the best 100 credits at Level 5 using the ratio 2:8 for Level 5: Level 6.
2. The APM based on the best 100 credits at Level 6.
3. The classification is determined by reference to the overall profile and performance with the minimum requirement that:
 - i. a minimum of 60 credits at Level 6 are in the classification band. And
 - ii. the highest APM is no lower than 2 percentage points below that required for the classification

For Honours Degrees the following scale will be used to determine the award classification: APM:

- 70 - 100% First Class Honours
- 60 - 69% Upper Second Class Honours
- 50 - 59% Lower Second Class Honours
- 40 - 49% Third Class Honours

The regulations regarding re-assessment opportunities are in line with sector norms and are also included here [Academic Regulations](#) (Section G11/12).

UCLan alignment with sector supported principles on degree algorithms

[UK Standing Committee on Quality Assessment \(UKSCQA\) principles for effective degree algorithm design](#) outlines principles for effective algorithm design. This states that to be effective, an algorithm must:

1. provide an appropriate and reliable summary of a student's performance against the learning outcomes, reflecting the design, delivery and structure of a degree programme.
2. fairly reflect a student's performance without unduly over-emphasising particular aspects, with consideration being taken at the design stage of how each element within a method of classification interacts with other elements.
3. protect academic standards by adhering to the current conventions and national reference points used to define classification bands and boundaries.
4. normally be reviewed at least every five years - or alongside national cyclical review timetables - to ensure algorithms remain relevant and appropriate, with input from across the provider, including students, academic and non-academic staff, and accrediting bodies.
5. be designed and reviewed in a way that is mindful of the impact of different calculation to classification for different groups of students.
6. be communicated and explained clearly to students, both in how it works and why

The University's algorithm has been designed in line with these requirements and are in line with sector norms. Our classification algorithms are published and available to all students within our

[Academic Regulations](#) (Section H4). The same regulations normally apply to all students undertaking a UCLan award regardless of their location of delivery.

Our classification algorithm has been in place in its current form since 2018-19. The change occurring in 2018-19 being one of simplification to streamline from a classification based on the best of multiple algorithms.

In line with the principles for effective algorithm design, the University is currently reviewing its classification algorithm.

UCLan alignment with sector supported principles on external examiners

Externality is embedded throughout University quality assurance policies and procedures and in summary includes:

- the use of external advisors in the development and approval of new programmes;
- the role of external examiners and their reports;
- the role of the chief external examiner;
- other external reference points including reports from PSRBs; and
- the inclusion of external panel members in Periodic Review and course re-approval processes.

The External Examiner system is an integral part of the University's quality assurance and enhancement processes. External Examiners play a crucial role in the maintenance of academic standards, ensuring assessment processes are conducted fairly and in accordance with our academic framework. The University's guidance for External Examiners takes account of and aligns with the expectations of the Quality Assurance Agency's principles and with sector norms.

In light of the Publication of UK Standing Committee for Quality Assurance Statement of Intent on Degree Classifications (2019) and External Examining Principles (2022), the University has initiated a holistic review of its external examiner policy and processes to ensure that our arrangements are fit for purpose, comparable to the sector and 'future-proofed' to the changes within the institution and higher education sector. This review is due to complete during the 2023-24 academic year.

Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and Learning Resources

The University is committed to continually enhancing the quality of our learning and teaching and student experience. A number of initiatives led by our Pro-Vice Chancellor [Students and Teaching] are underway, linked to our University Strategy and Sub strategies in particular those sub strategies related to Priority 1: Student Opportunity and Success and Priority 2: Leading the Way in Modern Learning.

These sub- strategies we believe will improve student performance and outcomes by our focus on:

- **Retention:** ensuring we have the mechanisms and structures in place to support every single student to progress and complete their studies successfully, irrespective of their background and circumstances.
- **Attainment:** to make sure our attainment and the percentage of good degrees is in line with our competitors. Our approach to assessment and academic support means every student will have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

- **Graduate outcomes:** by supporting our students to secure a rewarding career in skilled employment, study further, or establish their own successful businesses.
- **Second-to-none support:** with an effective, whole-University approach, maintaining a consistent and joined-up support network, with an emphasis on early intervention.
- **Access and participation <https://www.uclan.ac.uk/values-and-initiatives/widening-participation/access-participation-plan>:** becoming recognised as the exemplary, inclusive, University of opportunity that we are. We'll be even more supportive, celebrating diversity so our students benefit from a vibrant learning community and sense of belonging. Data on attainment shows the University is making progress in levelling up attainment of students from Polar Quintile 1 in comparison to Polar Quintile 5. The University recognizes that it has further work to do in relation to other priority groups.
- **Student voice and experience:** by listening and responding effectively to every single student. This includes maintaining appropriate channels of informal and formal feedback and responding to all feedback in a timely manner. We'll also establish dashboards to draw out major themes and help us plan for future needs.
- **Learn from the Covid-19 pandemic:** building on our strength in digital excellence to become a market leader in this new era of flexible learning.
- **Ensuring an efficient and effective course portfolio:** structured for best possible delivery, with positive metrics that will ensure we achieve our league table aspirations.
- **Implementing the Curriculum Framework:** introduced in 2020 we continue to roll out re-approval of courses to meet our curriculum framework so every course embodies our shared characteristics, such as sustainability and green skills, digital literacy, wellbeing, and interdisciplinary experiences. This will endow our graduates with the attributes they need to succeed in a changing, complex, globalised world.
- **Ensuring excellent teaching:** We'll become more widely recognised for our exceptional teaching, and we'll develop and encourage our staff to become world-leading, cutting-edge, and inspiring educators. Currently, the percentage of University staff holding Fellowship Status is 65% (AdvanceHE Oct 2022). Our average over the past 4 years has been in the range of 66.6%- 64.6%, significantly higher than the sector average (range 40.7%-46.1%). For our Fellowship Scheme over the past three years of comparative data we continue to be above the sector average in relation to the number of 'FHEA' awards made.
- **Encourage, share, and embedding innovation and good practice:** We'll become a beacon for innovation, making possible new approaches to learning and teaching, discovering new markets, and embracing new technology. In the spirit of continual improvement, we'll nurture our community of best practice, discovering, sharing and embedding what we learn

Course Review process. From 2022-23, the University implemented a new approach to monitoring and evaluating its courses. This data driven and continuous process reports at three specific census points (October, February and June) which coincide with the release of new data and information about each course. The new data and information about each course is accessed through Dashboards on Tableau or from other University processes/documentation associated with course delivery.

To aid the University in its pursuit of excellence, the process is designed to:

- To evaluate and enhance course quality.
- To ensure the best possible student experience within the resource available.
- To ensure that appropriate action is taken to remedy any identified shortcomings.
- To identify and disseminate innovative practice and commendations.

Following successful roll-out across the University in 2022-23, the new process has been rolled-out in UK and International Partners, and apprenticeship provision from September 2023.

Initiatives to support student retention, attainment and success

- **Getting Ready and Getting Started programme.** This programme is intended to help students to adapt to learning at University and support academic achievement and continuation through the provision of resources and events for offer-holders to help them make the transition into higher education and to support them through their first semester. In 2021, as a response to the pandemic and shift to online engagement, content was developed with input from across the University. Lecturers, student coaches and the wellbeing team helped inform the subject areas that should be covered and the Centre for Collaborative Learning helped to develop and quality assure the self-guided tutorials.
- **Achievement Coaches.** Alongside our Personal Tutoring Framework, the University employs a team of Achievement Coaches to provide high quality, personalised support to students so they are empowered to engage and succeed in their chosen programmes of study. Achievement Coaches are a significant investment in students' success and are embedded within School Teams to enable responsive, informed, and tailored support. Achievement Coaches play a central part in our institutional Early Intervention Model and utilise several data sources through an analytical tool to identify students that require additional support and subsequently engage students in individual sessions designed to facilitate their success.
- **WISER.** WISER supports all students at all levels to develop their academic skills and fulfil their academic potential. Services include; one-to-one tutorials, drop-in sessions and workshops.

The University continues to make a considerable investment in our estate, ensuring it is fit for purpose, enhances the student experience and supports the highest quality teaching and research. The University has built on our experiences of delivering learning and teaching during the pandemic and has invested heavily in digital infrastructure and training to support both staff and students during this time.

From 2023-24, the University has brought together a number of services under the umbrella of Student Achievement Services. This includes Careers, Achievement Coaches, Personal Tutors and Academic and Skills development. Collectively, they will focus on driving forward the achievement of UCLAN students.

Within the newly published [University Strategic Plan 2021-2028](#) we have an enabling IT Strategy whose vision is 'to provide a digital environment that enables, inspires, enhances and empowers our people and our business to succeed'.

Review of progress against actions in the Degree Outcome statement 2022

The following actions were identified in the 2022 Degree Outcomes Statement:

1	External Examining review. In response to the Publication of UK Standing Committee for Quality Assurance Statement of Intent on Degree Classifications (2019) and External Examining Principles (2022), the University has initiated a holistic review of its external examiner policy and processes to ensure that our arrangements are fit for purpose, comparable to the sector and 'future-proofed' to the changes within the institution and higher education sector. This review will take place over the 2022-23 and 2023-24 academic years and is due to provide an interim report in May 2023 and outline proposed actions to be implemented over the following academic years.	In progress and due to complete during the 2023.24 academic year.
2	Curriculum Framework. The initial phase of the roll-out of the Curriculum Review is due to complete during 2023. All new courses will be designed and developed in line with the Curriculum Framework. The implementation and effectiveness of the Curriculum Framework will normally be reviewed on an annual basis.	Completed. The Curriculum Framework review will complete during 2023, with all provision re-validated under the framework.
3	Review of the Degree Classification Algorithm. In line with the principles for effective algorithm design, the University will review its classification algorithm during the 2022-23 academic year.	In progress and due to complete during the 2023.24 academic year.
4	Extension of data dashboards to include collaborative provision based in the UK and overseas. Following successful roll-out of data dashboards for on-campus provision, the University is working to extend the coverage of the dashboards to include collaborative provision.	
5	Degree Outcomes Statement. The University commits to reviewing its Degree Outcomes statement annually and will build this into its reporting structure. The timing of the review will be scheduled to come after the submission and confirmation of external reporting data.	Completed.

Actions proposed for 2024

1	Review of the impact of mitigations and special measures deployed in response to the Marking and Assessment Boycott.
2	Implementation of any recommendations from the review of the Degree Algorithm and Academic Regulations.
3	Implementation of any recommendations from the External Examiners review.



4	Review of student achievement at School level and Partner level to understand the differences and deploy appropriate actions to support student achievement in lower performing schools and partners.
5	Link to Access and Participation Plan (APP) to review student achievement in target groups differences and deploy appropriate actions to support student achievement/close gaps in those groups.
6	Consider the inclusion of a section relating specifically to Degree Apprenticeship provision.