

Institutional degree classification profile

1. AU operates a common set of conventions for the award of all undergraduate degrees. Examination boards are centrally managed and rigorous checks are in place to ensure that the University adheres to its regulations and conventions. Annual reports from external examiners consistently confirm that standards are in line with those elsewhere and the threshold standards in the UK. AU Examination Conventions determine progression between years of study and the algorithm for the calculation of degree classes. Regulations and quality assurance procedures are published online in the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH) <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic-registry/handbook/>.
2. Data

Percentage of Students by Degree Classifications					
Class	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
1	20%	23%	27%	23%	24%
II(1)	51%	53%	50%	47%	48%
II(2)	26%	21%	21%	26%	23%
III/PASS	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%

Degree outcomes continue to show a return to pre-pandemic levels, with a fall in Good Honours rates (1 and II(1) combined) very similar to rates seen before the pandemic. Of note is the slight change in distribution with more students achieving a 1 and fewer a II(1).

Percentage of Degree Classifications by Subject						
Subject	Class	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
STEM	1	24%	24%	30%	26%	28%
	II(1)	48%	47%	45%	43%	43%
	II(2)	24%	23%	21%	27%	25%
	III/PASS	4%	6%	4%	5%	4%
Non-STEM	1	17%	22%	24%	20%	20%
	II(1)	53%	57%	54%	52%	57%
	II(2)	27%	19%	20%	25%	20%
	III/PASS	3%*	*	*	*	*

These proportions reflect the national picture of higher awards being more prevalent in STEM subjects. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/outcomes/breakdown>

Percentage of Degree Classifications by Sex						
Sex	Class	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Female	1	22%	26%	28%	28%	28%
	II(1)	53%	55%	51%	48%	49%
	II(2)	23%	18%	19%	22%	21%
	III/PASS	*	*	*	*	*
Male	1	17%	19%	25%	18%	21%
	II(1)	48%	50%	48%	47%	46%
	II(2)	29%	25%	23%	31%	26%
	III/PASS	6%	6%	4%	5%	6%

As in previous years, female students achieve higher outputs than male students, which is in line with national results published by HESA <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/outcomes>.

Female students have also retained the pandemic level proportion in relation to achieving higher 1st class degrees.

Percentage of Degree Classifications by Disability						
		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Known to Have Disability	1	22%	24%	28%	24%	26%
	II(1)	50%	52%	48%	52%	47%
	II(2)	23%	19%	22%	21%	24%
	III/PASS	*	*	*	*	*
No known Disability/Unknown	1	19%	22%	27%	23%	24%
	II(1)	51%	53%	50%	47%	49%
	II(2)	26%	22%	20%	27%	22%
	III/PASS	3%	4%	3%	4%	3%

In 2022/23 20% of graduates were known to have a disability. Overall, the proportion of students achieving good honours is the same regardless of whether the student is known to have a disability or not.

Percentage of Degree Classifications by age at award						
Age	Class	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Below 25	1	19%	23%	28%	23%	24%
	II(1)	51%	53%	50%	49%	49%
	II(2)	26%	20%	20%	25%	23%
	III/PASS	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
25 and above	1	30%	19%	20%	27%	33%
	II(1)	43%	48%	44%	35%	39%
	II(2)	22%	26%	28%	30%	18%
	III/PASS	*	*	*	*	*

12% of graduates in 2022/23 were over the age of 25. In the past 2 years older graduates have achieved a higher percentage of first-class awards than younger graduates, this is a return to the trend seen before the pandemic.

* Denotes that the data has been suppressed as per the Higher Statistics Agency rounding strategy to reduce the risk of identifying individuals from published figures

Assessment and marking practices

- Assurance of assessment and marking practices is provided through engagement with external examiners and assessors, from the development of programmes through to delivery, assessment and annual monitoring. Cyclical review processes, take a longer term perspective of student performance and achievement at subject level. Annually around 70 subject level undergraduate academic external examiners are managed through a central team, and overseen by Academic Board. The final Senate degree awarding board, involves external scrutiny of AU's processes by a senior administrator from another UK university.
- External examiners are key to the assurance process. Appointees are academics experienced in assessment, curriculum design, and enhancement of the student experience. Criteria for appointment and their role are set out in the AQH and an online briefing is provided for all new externals. A summary and overview of external examiner reports is provided annually to Senate. Aberystwyth staff also act as external examiners and panel members at other institutions, engage with staff development including as Advance HE fellows all of which contribute to a wider awareness of external reference points and subject benchmarking.
- The AQH sets out the processes and provides guidance for assessment, marking and moderation procedures, treatment of special circumstances and appeals. Independent internal observers attend departmental exam boards as well as subject external examiners and departments undertake an analysis of results as part of the exam board process. All work, including examinations, is marked against criteria outlined to students at the beginning of a module. Annual reports on the level and types of academic appeals indicate that these are made on the grounds of special circumstances and provide further reassurance that marking and moderation processes are effective. Special circumstances are managed in each Faculty, with recommendations reviewed centrally and difficult cases referred to a central Senate special circumstances panel.

Academic governance

6. Faculty Academic Affairs Committees report up to Academic Board and onto Senate, which is responsible for academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement of all provision. Partnership arrangements are overseen by the Collaborative Provision Board, which also reports to Senate. The Senate Examination Board is the degree awarding board to which all departmental boards report. Academic Board and Senate are given the opportunity to contribute to and comment on this Degree Outcomes Statement and the annual QA statement provides the governing body with oversight of QA, including partnership activities.

Classification algorithms

7. The honours classification system is determined according to a common set of conventions. The 'cascade' is a weighted average of all modules taken in part two contributing to the final degree. It allows students to retrieve earlier poor performance; focusing on and rewarding good performance while not giving undue penalties for failure; it can cope with different possible combinations of levels and modules of different credit weightings, giving a lower weighting for lower level modules. The algorithm has not changed since its inception in the 1990s apart from the weighting given to year abroad studies. Students are normally assessed immediately following completion of teaching and allowed two resit opportunities for a capped mark (40% for FHEQ level 4, 5 and 6 and 50% for level 7), reassessment is not allowed for any passed modules.

Teaching practices and learning resources

8. The University continues to invest in improvements in learning resources and to support innovation in teaching practices and a dedicated Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit supports academic staff. Widespread practices include mandatory lecture capture for all lectures; electronic submission of coursework with online marking and feedback; principles of effective feedback including guidelines for exam feedback; an attendance policy combined with attendance monitoring; the use of learning analytics and engagement dashboard by personal tutors and also proactive interventions with low-engaging students; required minimum presence (RMP) on the VLE; mandatory reading lists for all modules, refurbishment of teaching rooms and creation of social learning spaces; Peer Support for Teaching and sharing of effective teaching practice through annual L&T conference, Exemplary Course Award (ECA) and CPD programme; and University-wide Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs).

Identifying good practice, and actions

9. The operation of a single university wide degree algorithm is one of good practice and centrally managed processes help to deliver consistent application of rules across all academic departments. In the interests of further improving consistency, work will continue to review procedures to see where more operational activities could be automated.

Risks and challenges

While we are confident that no notable risks have been identified, we will maintain a close watch on the data for the next couple of years will help to provide a clearer indication of the awarding profile outside of a pandemic. The annual quality assurance statement to the Governing Body is the mechanism by which quality assurance processes a reported, drawing attention to activity in the previous year. A traffic light system provides an indication of the level of concern against the key issues identified in the executive summary in the report.

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