



Cardiff  
Metropolitan  
University

Prifysgol  
Metropolitan  
Caerdydd

## Degree Outcomes Statement 2020-21

### Introduction

This Degree Outcomes Statement forms an annual part of Cardiff Metropolitan University's core business. It sets out how the institution maintains academic standards and protects the value of its qualifications. It demonstrates that:

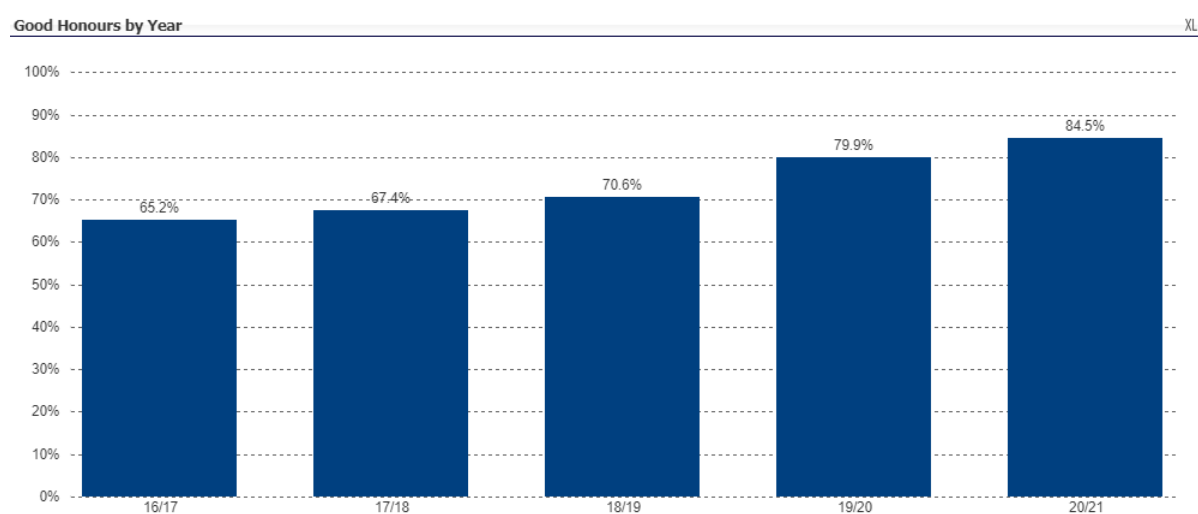
- The Board of Governors have confidence that the arrangements in place protect the value of the University's qualifications.
- Cardiff Metropolitan University can provide HEFCW with assurance that the University meets national degree standards.
- The University's method of calculating undergraduate degree classifications has been in place since 2014 and sits within a stable policy and regulatory framework.
- The proportion of Cardiff Metropolitan students achieving a First Class or Upper Second Class honours degree aligns with the trends seen in the sector.
- The University continues to have a strategic focus on clear and achievable teaching, learning and assessment strategies, intended to equip students with a range of subject-specific knowledge and professional skills.

### 1. Institutional Degree Classification Profile

The proportion of Cardiff Metropolitan students achieving a First Class or Upper Second Class honours degree (referred to as 'Good Honours') has steadily increased over the past five years. Table 1 shows that 84.5% of students achieved Good Honours classifications in 2020/21. This overall pattern is in keeping with the sector trends as published by HESA in January 2022, showing a sector average for 2020/21 of 82% Good Honours (HESA, 2020/21 cohort).

Table 1 shows the Good Honours profile for Cardiff Metropolitan University for the academic years 2016/17 to 2020/21.

Table 1. Cardiff Metropolitan University Good Honours profile (2016/17 – 2020/21).



### Exceptional Mitigation due to the Covid-19 Pandemic

In common with the majority of the Higher Education sector, Cardiff Metropolitan University introduced a range of measures to support student wellbeing and academic achievement during the exceptional circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. Arrangements were regularly reviewed and evolved in line with public health guidance and to mitigate for any subsequent impact on teaching and learning. Students graduating in the 2020/21 academic year would have been taught and assessed at Levels 5 and 6 under these measures.

The three iterations of the Cardiff Met No Detriment Policy were carefully devised to underpin a key principle that no student's academic achievement would be negatively impacted by the unprecedented circumstances. The Policy, approved by the Academic Board was designed to safeguard the value of our academic qualifications against the existing national frameworks for the awarding of credit. It was a supplement to and not in contradiction of, the main University Assessment Regulations. The degree classification algorithms and borderline criteria were not altered at any point.

No exceptional mitigation was applied in any instance where this would have compromised Professional and Statutory Body requirements.

### No Detriment (Phase 1) Policy 2019/20 (Cardiff and Transnational Education students)

The original No Detriment Policy, applicable during the acute initial lockdown period (21<sup>st</sup> March 2020 until the end of the academic year) stipulated that:

- Students were given the opportunity of an automatic two-week extension to the original submission date for any written work.
- Requirements for supporting evidence for Mitigating Circumstances claims were relaxed.
- Students who were eligible (by attempting the summative assessment in question) were entitled to one reinstated attempt for any (re)assessment submitted between 21<sup>st</sup> March 2020 and the end of the academic session, regardless of whether they had passed or failed.
- Students who were eligible (by engaging with and attempting all assessments and passing the relevant module) received a 'Safety Net mark' if their module result was lower than their pre-pandemic level average.

### No Detriment (Phase 2) Policy (Cardiff-based students)

Phase Two of the Policy set out the principles and methodology for the 2019/20 reassessment period and confirmed how it would be implemented at subsequent Examination Boards, through the transition into the 2020/21 academic year.

### No Detriment (Phase 3) Policy 2020/21 (Cardiff-based students)

It was hoped that adjustments made to existing processes, assessment schemes and procedures would be sufficient to mitigate any ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and that there would be no requirement for a prolonged expansive mitigation of assessment beyond January 2021. It became clear, however that the ongoing changeable circumstances from September 2020 necessitated further exceptional provision.

Phase Three of the Policy stipulated:

- Students who qualified (by attempting the summative assessment in question) were entitled to one reinstated attempt for any (re)assessment in 2020/21, regardless of whether they had passed or failed.
- An enhanced moderation of module results was undertaken, whereby the whole cohort's results were benchmarked against previous module performance. If the module's 2020/21 results were lower on average than those achieved pre-pandemic, the marks of all students who had passed the module were adjusted proportionally by the Examination Board (unless capped at the minimum pass mark due to previous failure).
- Uplift of all borderline students within 2% of higher degree class (students would normally have to fulfil at least one of three stipulated criteria – see Section 4.)

Table 2 shows that that the University's profile of First and Upper Second Class honours degrees has shown proportional growth between 2016/17 and 2020/21. This has been driven by the increase in the proportion of First Class honours (see Table 3).

Table 2. Trends in classifications between 2016/17 and 2020/21.

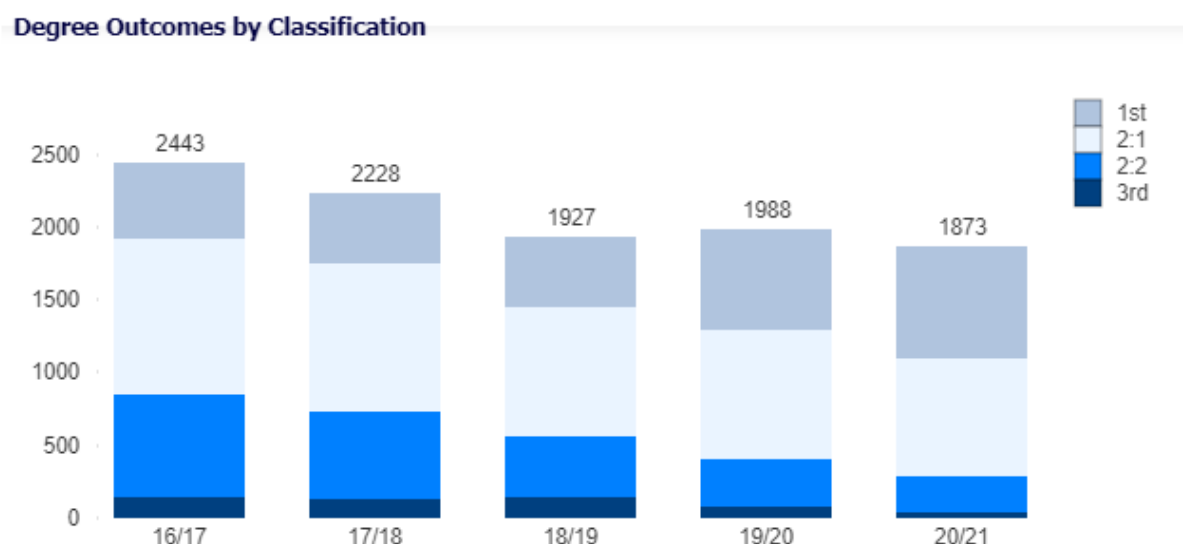


Table 3 shows that degree outcomes for First Class awards (41.2%) have increased since 2016/17 and are now higher than the sector average (36%). Upper Seconds (43.3%) are

broadly in line with wider sector outcomes (46%) and actually fell slightly in 2020/21. The percentage of Lower Seconds (13.2%) and Third Class (2.3%) degrees have steadily fallen over the past five academic years and in 2020/21 remained slightly lower than the sector averages of 14% and 3% respectively.

Table 3. Overall Degree Outcomes 2016/17 – 2020/21

<b>Overall Degree Outcomes (%)</b>				
<b>ACCYEAR</b>	<b>First Class (%)</b>	<b>Upper Second (%)</b>	<b>Lower Second (%)</b>	<b>Third (%)</b>
16/17	21.6%	43.7%	28.9%	5.9%
17/18	21.4%	46.0%	26.6%	6.0%
18/19	24.6%	46.0%	22.2%	7.2%
19/20	35.0%	45.0%	16.2%	3.8%
20/21	41.2%	43.3%	13.2%	2.3%

As explained above, exceptional mitigations were introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, robust academic standards were maintained with students still having to be assessed and meet the required learning outcomes in order to pass their modules.

Table 4 shows that in line with the trends in good honours outcomes, the percentage of Good Honours outcomes also increased for all student characteristics. This built on an earlier increase in 2019/20.

Table 4. Percentage of Good Honours degrees awarded to First Degree Students by academic year broken down by student characteristics.

<b>Good Honours Outcomes by Student Characteristic (%)</b>						
<b>ACCYEAR</b>	<b>Good Honours (%)</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Mature</b>	<b>Young</b>	<b>BME</b>
16/17	65.2%	70.9%	58.7%	59.0%	78.0%	43.5%
17/18	67.4%	74.4%	58.9%	61.9%	79.9%	47.2%
18/19	70.6%	73.9%	66.6%	65.7%	80.4%	55.3%
19/20	79.9%	82.8%	76.4%	76.8%	85.6%	68.4%
20/21	84.5%	87.4%	81.0%	80.7%	90.8%	76.3%

The increases were consistently around 5% for each characteristic with the exception of the BME student characteristic which was 7.9%.

### **Initiatives / actions**

The No Detriment Policy is no longer in operation, but students graduating from the 2021/22 cohort will have been subject to Phase 3 of the Policy during 2020/21.

## **2. Assessment and Marking Practices**

The University's assessment and marking practices place a strong emphasis on the constructive alignment of intended learning outcomes, assessment methods and assessment criteria to ensure that assessment is fair, valid, and reliable. Programmes are approved for delivery following confirmation that the curriculum (including proposed assessment methods) align with the FHEQ/CQFW and any relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statements or PSRB requirements. Regulations governing marking and moderation are available to staff and students in the Academic Handbook and seek to ensure that marking is fair, consistent, and transparent. The University's band descriptors

steer markers and moderators to the academic standards students are expected to achieve to receive marks in a particular category and map to FHEQ descriptors. The University's assessment practices were mapped against the revised QAA Quality Code in 2019 and it was confirmed that they continue to map to QAA Expectations and Practices.

The appropriateness of programme assessment criteria is monitored annually by an External Examiner. In their annual report External Examiners are required to confirm whether standards are appropriate for the award and are aligned to the relevant level of the FHEQ and QAA subject benchmark statements. They are also required to judge whether the standards of awards are comparable to those of other institutions and, where relevant, that they meet PSRB requirements.

External Examiners scrutinise a specified sample of assessed work so that they can make judgements about the standards of student performance and the consistency and fairness of assessment processes. For the 20/21 academic session 100% of External Examiners confirmed that the programmes they considered were aligned with sector benchmarks (including the FHEQ and benchmark statements). 98.85% of External Examiners confirmed that academic standards and student achievement on programmes aligned with other UK HEIs. 100% of External Examiners confirmed that programmes with a PSRB affiliation continued to reflect PSRB requirements. For programmes delivered with partners, assessment and marking practices are the same as those described above.

### **3. Academic Governance**

The University's Academic Board is responsible for the standards and quality of all provision that leads to the award of credit in its name. The Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) is empowered by Academic Board to have oversight, on its behalf, of the academic standards of its awards and for the quality of the student learning experience. On an annual basis the University, through the work of its AQSC, assures its regulator HEFCW that 'the standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately set and maintained.' It does so following scrutiny of a suite of reporting on the University's programme approval and review processes, annual monitoring processes, assessment processes, and arrangements for Examination Boards. This exercise includes scrutiny of External Examiner reporting on whether assessment designs are appropriate, criteria and marking schemes are set at the right level and whether assessment processes are fair reliable and thorough. For programmes delivered with partners the exercise of authority and oversight is the same as that described above.

### **4. Classification Algorithms**

There are two available [algorithms](#) for undergraduate honours degrees. However, each individual programme uses only one. The relevant algorithm must be validated and stipulated in each published Programme Specification document. The algorithm will apply consistently to all students on the programme.

Students are required to successfully complete all modules registered against their programme in order to qualify for a final award. However, the Examination Board is empowered to award credits for a 'compensated pass'. This may be done where the module result is a marginal fail but the student is deemed to have met the minimum learning outcomes across the module and has a Level average which is above the minimum pass mark.

Classifications are determined either from:

- the average of the aggregated marks achieved in the best 100 credits at Level 6 (weighted at 0.7) and the next best 100 credits at Level 5 or above (weighted at 0.3); or,
- from the average of the marks achieved in the best 100 credits at Level 6 only.

### **Borderline criteria for uplifts**

If a student's overall mark falls within the numerical range for an uplift, the Examination Board will confirm if one is to be awarded by referring to the universally applied criteria:

Any student within **1%** of a higher classification is automatically confirmed for an upgrade.

Any student within **2%** of a higher classification an Examination Board is empowered to raise the degree class if they fulfil at least one of three specific upgrade criteria:

- Majority of credits in the higher band (50% or more credits at level 6 in the higher classification).
- Exit Velocity based on a comparison of the Level 5 and Level 6 average marks. Where the Level 6 average is in the higher classification band, the Examination Board will normally award the higher class of degree.
- Performance in the major final stage project or dissertation.

### **Resit / retrieval limits**

Students can be offered up to two retrieval opportunities, unless prohibited by Programme-specific regulations, or precluded by an Exam Board decision based on their whole academic profile. For example, they have exhausted all attempts for a different module so must be withdrawn. Where reassessment at second or third attempt is necessary, the module is capped at the minimum pass mark. This in line with practice across the sector as outlined in the Universities UK publication ['Understanding Degree Algorithms'](#).

## **5. Teaching practices and Learning Resources**

The University continues to support student continuation, engagement, and award outcomes, through its Assessment and Feedback Policy, Personal Tutoring Policy and professional learning offer provided through its Quality Enhancement Directorate. In response to student feedback in recent NSS, SSS and PTES surveys a new set of minimum requirements for Moodle have recently been introduced. These include a range of digital accessibility requirements (to comply with the current legislation), a new standard template for module handbooks and new conventions for the layout of module content. The intention is to improve consistency and predictability in how learning content is set out across our programmes and includes more use of videos to guide students. The new requirements are being rolled out in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 academic years.

## **6. Identifying Good Practice and Actions**

Good practice in the area of assessment and student outcomes identified through the programme enhancement planning rounds include the roll out of standardised assessment brief templates in Cardiff School of Management and the development of shared delivery and assessment approaches created collaboratively by cross-programme teams as part of the Cardiff School of Sport and Health Science Undergraduate Health Portfolio Review. The Collaboration between the PDR International Centre for Design and Research and the

BSc Podiatry programme team to enhance online clinical assessment was also highlighted, as was the role of Student Coach for peer support amongst students in Cardiff School of Technologies. The inclusion across programmes of authentic assessment strategies, with an embedded approach to real-world and problem-based learning, was also noted in Cardiff School of Technologies. In Cardiff School of Education and Social Policy the use of innovative lab-based learning and assessment activities on the professional policing programme was noted as innovative practice.

The analysis of External Examiner reporting on assessment practices for the last reporting round identified as a strength the University's clear and achievable teaching, learning and assessment strategies, constructed around equipping students with the range of subject-specific knowledge and professional skills to serve them well as graduates. Areas of good practice in assessment and feedback identified in individual programmes included:

*BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy – CSSHS - Llandaff The teaching and learning and assessment design across the modules is very authentic to clinical practice (and therefore employability), providing opportunities to develop a full range of professional skills in addition to assessing core learning outcomes. Feedback is a strength across all of the modules reviewed: it is balanced, clear and accessible and easily applicable to students moving into newly qualified practitioner role or to subsequent levels in the programme”*

*BA (Hons) Photography – CSAD - Areas of good practice are evident in many areas of teaching, learning and assessment. It is clear from the meetings I had with students that the staff work very hard to maintain a student-centred partnership... From my own perspective I can see that the embedding of EDGE characteristics into module assessment is an excellent way to ensure that students develop a keen sense of what will help them to become employable. I would also like to commend the assessment method of interim assessments being formative only. I think this encourages students to experiment as well as enabling students to improve their work before final assessment.*

*MSc International Business Management – CSM - While examples of good practice exist across the programme, I would like to identify the following modules for their innovative use of teaching and assessment methods: In search of Creativity, Innovation and Difference, Professional Development, Practice and Performance.*

Good practice is disseminated via the University's Quality Enhancement Directorate through workshops, online videos and guides and its annual Quality Enhancement Conference.