

## DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT 2020

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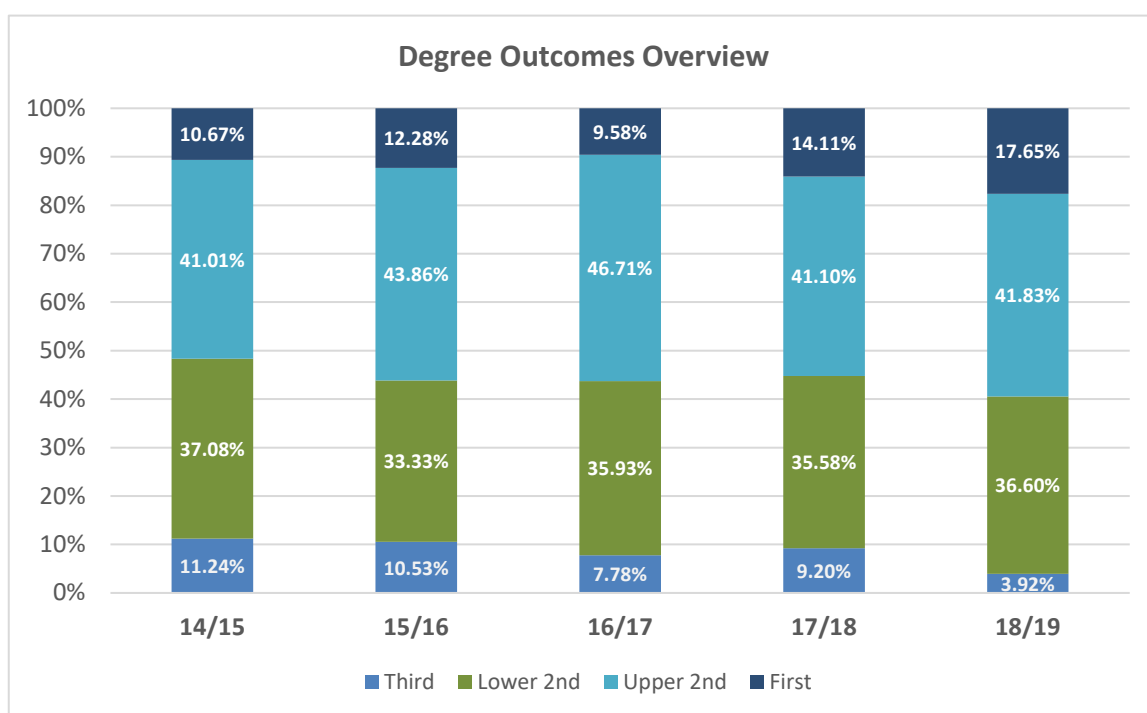


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### 1. Institutional Degree Classification Profile

1.1. Table 1. below shows the percentage of Writtle University College (WUC) first degree qualifiers obtaining each classification between academic years 2014/15 to 2018/19.

**Table 1.**



1.2. The proportion of students achieving a good honours award (i.e. 2:1 or 1<sup>st</sup>) has averaged 55.76% over the five-year period. With the exception of Academic Year 2016/17 the percentage of first-class degrees has gradually increased; with the percentage of third-class awards decreasing. The proportion of second-class awards (upper and lower) has remained consistent.

1.3. The slight increase in the achievement of first-class awards correlates with the additional support available to all students from the Student Success team. Notably from January 2019 onward, the addition of a new team delivering more study skill advice and support. WUC also noted a significant improvement in student retention during the first semester of the Student Success Team being in operation.

1.4. A breakdown of degrees by student characteristics across the last five years can be found at Appendix 1 (p.5).

- WUC does not have significant or consistent differences in degree attainment between entrants from areas where young participation rates are low (POLAR).
  - Over the last five years the proportion of our full-time undergraduate students declaring a disability has risen significantly (18% to 28%); and remains considerably higher than that of the sector as a whole (14.6%). The number of students with a declared disability achieving good awards has fluctuated over the period but improved between 2017/18 to 2018/19 and, based on early analysis, has increased again in 2019/20 due to our proactive approach and investment in student well-being and support schemes. Nonetheless WUC acknowledges that more work needs to be done to improve outcomes for our disabled students.
  - While BAME students achieved good honours awards in alignment with white students in academic years 2015/16 and 2016/17, this has changed in recent years. Throughout the 5-year period being considered, white students have continued to achieve an equal or higher proportion of good honours awards than BAME students on average; due to small numbers (on average only 4% of student population) it is challenging to analyse the reasons for this attainment gap.
  - Sector-wide data suggests that WUC's attainment gap for male students (average 11.8% over the period) is below that across the broader sector (16.2%).
- 1.5. WUC's [Access and Participation Plan 2020/21](#) provides more information on how it is reducing the attainment performance gap for specific groups.

## 2. Assessment and Marking Practices

WUC assures itself that assessment criteria meet sector standards through the mechanisms described in items 2.1 to 2.4 below:

- 2.1. Courses are designed and developed in alignment with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), national credit frameworks, QAA subject benchmark statements; and relevant Professional and Statutory Body (PSRB) requirements. All new higher education courses must be approved through WUC rigorous validation process, which includes externality from the sector and from industry. Any subsequent modifications that are made at course or module level, including the amendment of learning outcomes, are subject to a process that includes scrutiny by the External Examiner.
- 2.2. Higher education courses are reviewed through the Annual Course Review process. The process requires course leads to reflect and evaluate courses in relation to delivery as well as students' performance. The aim of the review is to develop and promote activities that enhance the student learning experience, promote excellence and identify and share good practice. The annual course review process also applies to collaborative partner institutions.
- 2.3. WUC Academic Regulations for UG and PG provision alongside the Rules of Assessment, guidance on assessment criteria, design, marking (including second marking and moderation)

and the scrutiny of External Examiners define the end-to-end process of assessment. Assessment related policies and procedures that impact directly on the outcome of awards, i.e. Academic Misconduct, Extenuating Circumstances, Academic Appeals and complaints are managed centrally through the HE Quality Office ensuring consistency of application and approach across the University College's higher education provision.

- 2.4. External Examiners ensure that standards and comparability are maintained and that students have fulfilled the objectives of modules and achieved the required standards of the award. The external examiner appointment policy is aligned with the QAA Advice and Guidance: External Expertise to ensure external examiners are appropriately qualified in relation to subject and quality expertise. External examiner engagement is integral to the end-to-end process of assessment.

### **3. Academic Governance**

- 3.1. The WUC Academic Board is responsible for the conferment of awards and delegates this authority to the Boards of Examiners (BoEs). BoE membership includes External Examiners who have responsibility for not only ensuring students have achieved the required standard for their module/course, but for also ensuring WUC standards are analogous with the sector generally.
- 3.2. The Board of Governors is assured that an effective framework is in place to ensure academic standards and to manage the quality of learning and teaching through various reports submitted via Academic Board.
- 3.3. Courses that are delivered through collaborative partnerships are subject to the same quality assurance and governance mechanisms as WUC's on-campus provision which includes Annual Course Reviews. In addition, the collaborative partnership Management Board, which oversees the day-to-day management of the partnership, submits an annual report to the respective Governing Bodies detailing actions taken by the Management Board.

### **4. Classification Algorithms**

- 4.1. WUC does not include level 4 within the calculation of the degree classification as this initial year of degree study is seen as an invaluable opportunity for students to learn to learn within the higher education environment.
- 4.2. For students registered for 3-year full time degree courses, the degree class is based upon Level 5 and Level 6 marks i.e. 40% of Level 5 marks and 60% of level 6 marks combined to give the final degree outcome.
- 4.3. Additional algorithms are applied for top-up students i.e. those entering from WUC Foundation Degrees (a) or those given direct entry into the final stage (b)
  - a) Marks from Level 5 of the Foundation Degree (40%) are used in the calculation of the honour's degree and 60% of Level 6 marks.
  - b) Level 6 marks only are used in calculating the degree class with classifications being awarded as follows:

- i. First Class Honours awarded to candidates who have a degree mark of 70 or more; or 60 credits at 70 or more with a degree mark of at least 68.
  - ii. Upper Second-Class Honours are awarded to candidates who have a degree mark of 60 or more; or 60 credits at 60 or more and a degree mark of at least 58.
  - iii. Lower Second-Class Honours are awarded to candidates who have a degree mark of 50 or more; or 60 credits at 50 or more and a degree mark of at least 48.
  - iv. Third Class Honours are awarded to candidates who meet the criteria for the award of an Honours degree but do not qualify for any other class of degree.
- 4.4. Students are usually entitled to three attempts at an assessment, including the first attempt. Without accepted Extenuating circumstances any successful attempt after the first attempt is capped at a pass mark of 40%.
- 4.5. Students who experience extenuating circumstances have the right to apply for mitigation through the WUC Extenuating Circumstances procedure.
- 4.6. WUC Rules of Assessment and Academic Regulations are reviewed annually; within that process wider sector practice, in relation to degree algorithms, is given due consideration.

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

- 5.1. Academic staff are encouraged to complete a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Practice (PG CHEP); with successful completion of part one of the programme leading to Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (*now Advance HE*).
- 5.2. Our curriculum is rooted in professional practice and industry projects, with live briefs a feature of many courses. Going forward it is WUC intention to extend this by moving from our current module-by-module assessment approach to include an integrated programme assessment (IPA) regime. This promotes a more holistic engagement with learning by assessing knowledge and skills at course (programme) level, rather than at a module level.
- 5.3. Major investment has been made over the last two years in a WUC Student Success team. This team provides targeted academic and pastoral support for students deemed to be 'at risk' through a staff and self-referral system. Additionally, the Learning Support team now has a dedicated member of staff to specifically support students referred with mental health challenges.

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

WUC will continue to monitor and engage with sector discourse and developments in relation to degree classification. Classification calculation methods will be reviewed accordingly to ensure methodologies remain consistent, fair and transparent.

## 7. Risks and Challenges

WUC recognises the need for more concentrated efforts in some areas to close persistent and specific gaps in access and student success. However, due to the small size of the institution and the high cost base of our provision, we have limited resources to assign to highly targeted activities. Our [Access and Participation Plan](#) details institution-wide measures to improve outcomes for all students.

Group Percentage Comparison Data

