

This 2025 update of the Degree Outcomes Statement summarises internal reviews undertaken to **assure the University of compliance with sector requirements for degree classifications** (including the FHEQ and OfS Quality Condition B4) which was **updated with information from additional reviews in 2020-22**; it also outlines **ongoing monitoring arrangements to ensure continued compliance**.

This statement covers all Undergraduate (FHEQ 6) and Integrated Master’s (FHEQ 7) degrees awarded in the past four academic years (2021/22 – 2024/25). Our degree classification algorithm is consistent across all our programmes, and has not changed in this period. Between 2009 and 2014 we made three permanent changes to our degree algorithm and supporting processes, making our degrees more demanding in the process: we increased internal progression hurdles on integrated master’s degrees; we increased the minimum proportions of credits to be undertaken at Levels 5 and 6 of Bachelor’s degrees; and we reduced the scope for the use of academic discretion (introducing a defined zone, and specific criteria, to inform its use).

### Degree Classification Profile

Between 2021/22 and 2024/25, the combined proportion of 1sts and 2:1s awarded decreased by around 3 percentage points from 91.7% to 88.5% (see Figure 1). Over the same period, the proportion of 1sts awarded decreased by 6 percentage points, from 40.6% in 2021/22 to 34.7% in 2024/25. Though there have been very marginal increases in the proportion of 1sts awarded over the last two years, the 2024-25 percentages are in line with pre-pandemic proportions (2017/18 and 2018/19 were 35% and 34% respectively). We are assured that our outcomes remain robust, in line with our outstanding student intake, and are reflective of their achievements.

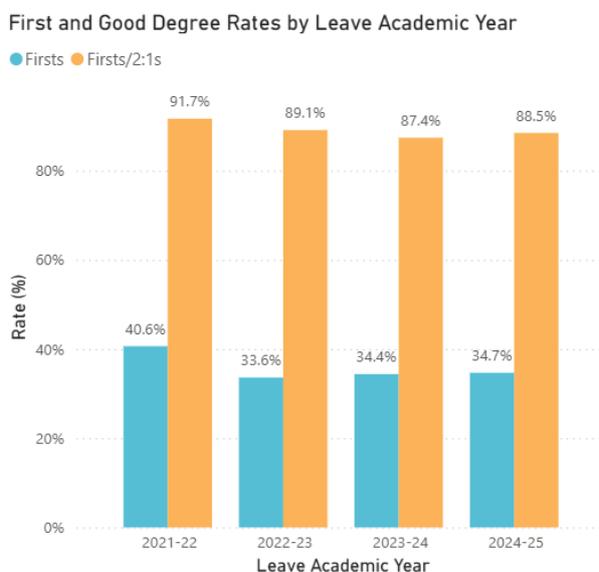
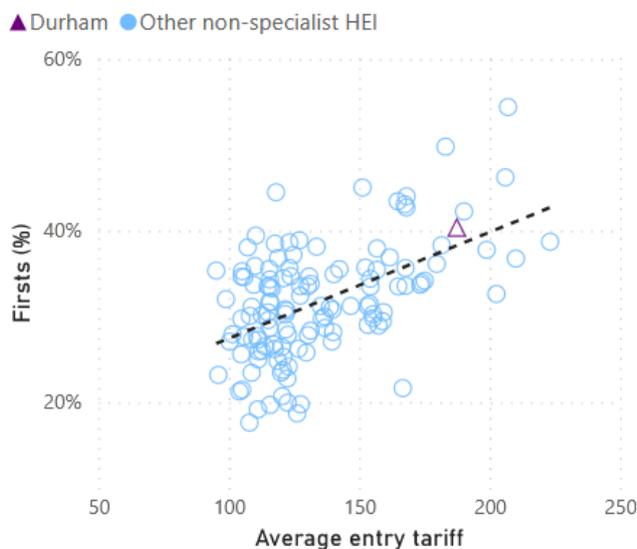


Figure 1 – Degree classifications for undergraduate and integrated master’s degrees, 2021/22-2024/25.

Qualifications on entry are closely correlated to degree classifications across the sector (see Figure 2 for the last detailed analysis, undertaken in 2021/22), and we admit academically able students who go on to achieve excellent results. The [Office for Students’ modelling of degree outcomes](#) consistently placed Durham among the universities with the lowest proportion of ‘unexplained’ 1sts since 2011. The 2023/24 OfS analysis suggests that the volume of ‘unexplained’ firsts/2:1s dropped slightly from 2022/23, with the number of ‘unexplained’ firsts marginally increasing, but that the volume remains low by sector standards. For firsts our ‘unexplained’ pp is +3% vs a sector University high of +37.7%, and for firsts/2:1s our ‘unexplained’ pp is +8.6% vs a sector University high of 26.4%. This external analysis, and our own periodic monitoring suggests that our 1sts and 1sts/2:1s awarded are still in line with expectations given the high achievements of our student intake.

Entry tariff vs 1sts, 2021/22



Entry tariff vs 1sts/2:1s, 2021/22

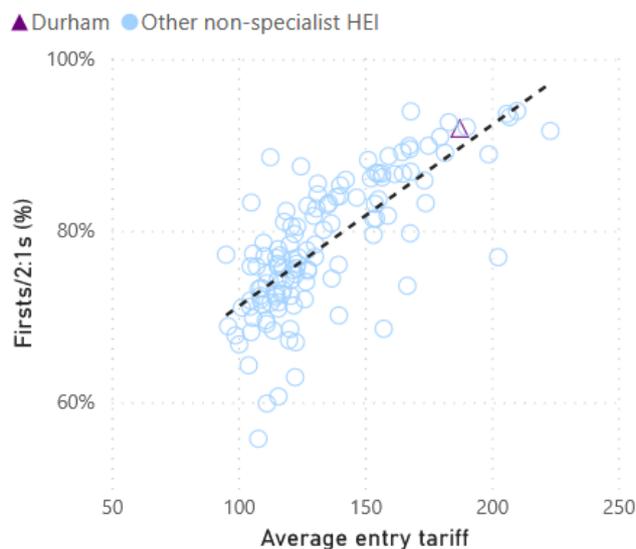


Figure 2— entry tariff vs 1sts, 1sts/2:1s for non-specialist HEIs in 2021/22 (i.e. the 130 HEIs that offer a wide range of courses). Average UCAS tariff are for 2018/19 UK-domiciled entrants, i.e. students that would be finishing a 3-year full-time degree in 2022.

## Monitoring

We monitor degree outcomes annually by department via a structured qualitative and quantitative analysis of external examiners' reports highlighting any programme of study that requires further attention, requiring responses that are monitored at an institutional level. This is supplemented by periodic (typically three year) reviews of subject degree outcomes against the sector (most recently in 2021/22; data should be released later this year which would permit a review of 2024/25 in the next 12 months), with annual circulation of internal marking data and trends (at assessment, module and programme level) provided to department and faculty Boards of Examiners to provide context for their decisions. The profile of degree classifications vary between Durham's faculties and their constituent departments, but patterns observed at the institutional level were replicated in all four faculties.

Differential performance between student groups is monitored through the [Access and Participation Plan](#), which contains an analysis of each underrepresented group, and is currently under review for the 2026 APP submission and action plan. We also monitor them annually through the Student Access, Success and Outcomes Committee. The attainment gap (1sts/2:1s) for mature students, which was historically our largest, has dropped to around 4.9pp for the last two years, down from more than 20pp in 2017/18.

## Assessment and marking practices

Assessment is governed by the University's [Core Regulations for Undergraduate Programmes](#), supported by guidance in the Learning and Teaching Handbook. All awards are aligned with the relevant levels of the FHEQ through agreed University-wide [level descriptors](#), and the University has an agreed scale of assessment criteria relating marks to classification boundaries (contained within the Core Regulations). We have clear guidance for the quality assurance of assessment and examination, dealing with mitigating circumstances, the use of academic discretion, matters of academic misconduct, and the operation of our Boards of Examiners (which consider all students anonymously).

All new programmes are assessed by internal and external experts against sector benchmarks including the FHEQ and, where relevant, QAA Subject Benchmark statements, and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements. Each programme has one or more appropriately qualified and experienced external

examiners who provide independent assurance that assessments are appropriate and rigorous, that marking is thorough and fair, and that the standard of student work is in line with benchmarks and at least on a par with that found at other universities. Departments are required to respond to any issues raised by examiners, and the reports and responses are published. In 2018/19, we reviewed and reconfirmed our practice in light of the QAA's published advice and guidance on [External Expertise](#).

We produce a University overview of external examiners' reports, and their responses feed into the annual monitoring of academic standards. Between 2017/18 and 2024/25, all of our examiners (almost 500 reports in all) agreed that standards were consistent with the university descriptors and the FHEQ. Similarly, all examiners agreed that standards at Durham were equivalent to (or in some cases exceeded) similar programmes elsewhere in the sector.

### Academic governance

University Senate has oversight of the quality and standards of academic programmes, and assurance is provided to Council through annual reports. Policy and operational management of quality and standards are governed through the University Education Committee and Quality and Standards Committee (QSC).

QSC and Education Committee consider annual reports relating to standards – including a statistical analysis of degree classifications and the overviews of external examiner reports – and summary reports are also considered by Senate and Council. QSC also has initial responsibility for monitoring degrees delivered through our collaborative partnerships, all of which are subject to standard monitoring and review processes, and which classify degrees under the University's single classification algorithm.

For our most substantive partnership – the Common Awards, a validation agreement with the Church of England and 19 Theological Educational Institutions (TEIs) – the University maintains oversight through a joint Common Awards Management Board, reporting into QSC. Programmes are standardised across the partnership, with a common assessment framework, and external examiners appointed by the University both for each partner and for the partnership overall. All awards are made by a University Board of Examiners, which is responsible for assuring the comparability of students' learning outcomes across the framework and with the University's standards.

### Classification algorithms

The University operates a single algorithm for the classification of undergraduate and integrated master's degrees: a weighted mean (AMW) of all module scores from second year (FHEQ 5) onwards, weighted by the credit value of the module and the year of study in the ratio 2:3 (2nd: 3rd year) for 3-year undergraduate degrees (or the part-time equivalents) and 2:3:4 for 4-year integrated master's. Resits are not permitted after the second year (FHEQ 5), when they are also limited to 60 credits maximum. The weighted averages are rounded to two decimal places, and students will be considered by their Board of Examiners for discretionary award of the higher classification if their AMW falls within 2 marks of a boundary. The Board agrees its decision anonymously on the basis of structured criteria outlined in the Learning and Teaching Handbook. There is no automatic rounding up.

Our 2019 deep-dive review of sector classification practice in 17 comparator universities, based on their published regulations and quality handbooks, found that practice at Durham was typically comparable with, or more stringent than, practice at similar institutions with regard to classification algorithms and directly related areas such as: approaches to condonement and compensation; minimum pass marks and credit requirements; rounding and the use of discretion; and opportunities and conditions for reassessment.

### Teaching practice and learning resources

We are a research-intensive institution committed to fostering teaching excellence, and a Durham degree is challenging by design. Our courses stretch our students, who leave the University with the skills and

abilities they will need to thrive in the future. Our internal qualification descriptors – key reference points for course approval and review – exceed the minimum expectations of the national FHEQ, with a specific emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge and the development of research and independent study skills. The high quality of our courses is explicitly recognised by the 36 Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies which accredit Durham’s provision; several have been active partners in co-designed courses.

Through our *Principles for the Development of the Taught Curriculum* (introduced as part of our *Education Strategy 2010-2015*) and more recently through the *Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment* (part of our *University Strategy 2017-2027*) we have revised all programmes of study in line with four key goals: research-informed education, inter- and multi-disciplinarity, internationalisation and employability.

Our staff are exceptionally committed to developing their teaching, and are supported by our [Durham Centre for Academic Development](#), which offers direct support and an integrated CPD programme aligned with UKPSF, [known as Delta](#), as well as a team directly supporting the development of digital education. We have also invested heavily in enhancing learning resources. The Library continues to expand physically and digitally. The [Teaching and Learning Centre](#), opened in 2019, provides collaborative learning space and cutting-edge technologies, including an education laboratory where new teaching and training methods are developed. We introduced Encore lecture recording in 2018, which has provided an additional support for all students, and particularly students with a disability and those for whom English is an additional language.

### Further planned work

In 2025/26, we will continue to monitor student performance and degree awards by department, working with our faculties and departments where we identify issues. We will also be undertaking a University-level review of 2024/25 outcomes.

In 2024/25 we launched an evidence-based review of the operation of academic discretion, drawing on a robust dataset (without the effects of the Covid-specific academic regulations in 2019/20 and 2020/21), with recommendations modelled for their potential impacts on the profile of degree outcomes due to presented to Education Committee in 2025/26.