

UEA DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT

1 Degree classification profile

1.1. Institutional Degree Classification Profile

The below table/ graph shows the University of East Anglia's (UEA's) annual degree classification profile between academic years 2015/16 and 2022/23.

Fig.1.

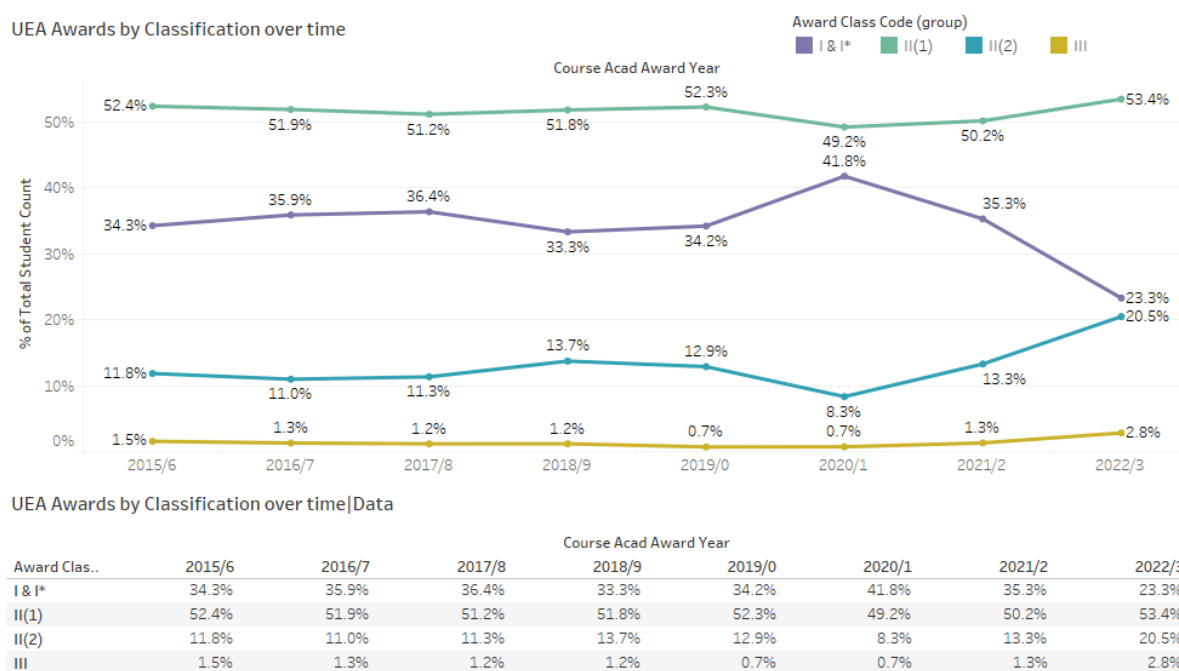


Figure 1 shows the percentage of First Class awards at UEA rose slightly each year from 2015/16 to 2017/18 then reduced slightly for 2 years before increasing again in 2020/1. In 2020/1, the proportion of First Class awards increased by seven percentage points and this was seen consistently across the sector. In 2021/2 this percentage returned to a level more consistent with previous years. The 2022/3 figure has dropped 12 percentage points to 23.3% with a notable increase in the proportion of Lower Second Class degrees awarded. Factors underpinning these trends, and actions taken by UEA in response are explained below.

1.2. Degree Classification Profile Split by School

Figure 2 summarises the percentage of Firsts by school over the same period.

The University of East Anglia degree algorithm changed in 2018/9 for new starters and the first graduates would have been in 2020/1 for students on 3 year programmes. The change removed automatic uplifts for students close to classification boundaries and so would have an impact on degree outcomes. (The automatic uplift was applied to students whose classification mark fell within 2% of a degree classification boundary where either at least 120 credits of their final two years were in the higher classification or their stage average mark for their final year was in the higher classification). This change was introduced to ensure academic standards and maintain credibility of awards. The consequence of this was masked in 2020/1 and somewhat in 2021/2 due to the no-detriment measures introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The change has influenced the outcomes seen in 2022/3 and supports the return of the proportion of Firsts to a more expected level.

In 2021/22 the proportion of firsts in many schools returned to a level seen pre-COVID after a rise in 2020/21 due to University Safety Net measures. It is worth noting that the Safety Net was still impacting outcomes in 2021/22 as Finalists in this year would have had a counting year during the main pandemic period.

Between 2021/2 and 2022/3 every School of Study except Natural Sciences has seen a decrease in the proportion of firsts awarded and this is more notable in some Schools than others. The general decrease is partly attributable to the return to standard degree awarding regulations post-COVID. It should be noted that the Natural Sciences cohort is small and so prone to statistical volatility.

Following guidance and advice from accrediting bodies and external examiners the Science Faculty returned to in-person examinations for academic year 22/23; as was the case pre-COVID. Despite extensive exam preparation and support, there is some evidence that this transition proved challenging to students. The impact of this change is expected to be less pronounced in 2023/24.

Fig.2.

Proportion of firsts by School

Dept	Award Class Code (group) / Course Acad Award Year I & I*				
	2018/9	2019/0	2020/1	2021/2	2022/3
Art, Media and American Studies	27.0%	31.8%	43.0%	28.6%	24.1%
Biological Sciences	35.1%	40.9%	58.1%	49.6%	29.0%
Chemistry	49.1%	51.1%	75.0%	45.7%	22.6%
Computing Sciences	36.7%	50.0%	56.8%	46.8%	33.2%
Economics	41.5%	34.0%	47.3%	32.2%	26.7%
Education and Lifelong Learning	26.2%	28.9%	26.0%	20.9%	13.3%
Engineering	36.7%	38.5%	63.6%	38.7%	20.0%
Environmental Sciences	22.4%	38.1%	46.1%	23.8%	22.9%
Health Sciences	64.3%	41.6%	49.1%	54.0%	34.1%
History	19.1%	27.5%	28.8%	22.6%	17.4%
International Development	26.2%	38.1%	35.9%	30.0%	28.6%
Law	9.5%	12.1%	21.5%	12.4%	4.7%
Literature, Drama and Creative Writing	31.5%	31.8%	33.2%	32.7%	21.1%
Mathematics	36.6%	45.1%	62.7%	48.9%	24.1%
Natural Sciences	44.0%	57.1%	76.9%	52.4%	60.0%
Norwich Business School	34.6%	36.5%	39.6%	31.6%	19.9%
Pharmacy	31.8%	42.4%	40.7%	37.4%	25.0%
Physics		40.0%	90.0%	37.0%	22.7%
Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies	20.8%	28.5%	36.2%	29.5%	17.6%
Psychology	18.4%	19.7%	28.0%	17.7%	15.9%
Social Work	28.6%	26.3%	45.8%	59.1%	15.4%
Sociology					18.8%

The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continued from AY 2019/20 into 2020/21. As many students who completed their degrees in 2021/22 had a counting year in 2020/21 the impacts are still apparent. Accordingly, the no-detriment contingency measures and actions aimed at supporting student attainment, progression and completion of summative assessment for AY 2019/20 were carried forward and continued into AY 2020/21. As required further mitigations were also introduced to support student experience and progression with decisions around these being made with inclusive practice in mind (for example, this included a suite of measures which incorporated, safety netting of an impacted year average; reduced assessment burden; increased use of compensation and additional time for completion of tasks). The impact of these no-detriment measures and their support for inclusivity are evidenced in the minimal impact shown on the medium-term trends in the gaps between underrepresented and disadvantaged students and their peers.

Reassurance about the rigour of assessment and award processes were subject to internal quality assurance activity, moderation and external examiner scrutiny.

1.3. Degree Classification Profile Split by Student Characteristics

UEA reviews degree awarding rates by different characteristics for all undergraduate students as part of the evaluation of the impact of UEA's Inclusive Education Policy (covering Curriculum, Assessment, Pedagogy and Environment) which supports our ongoing commitment to significantly reduce and ultimately remove degree awarding gaps between identified demographic groups.

UEA's Access and Participation Plan 2020/21 to 2024/25 (APP) makes a strong commitment to closing degree awarding gaps for Home undergraduate students from underrepresented student groups where the assessment of performance showed specific areas of concern. The APP also

commits the University to continually monitor differential degree awarding to address any opening gaps.

Specific targets were set as part of the University's registration with the Office for Students (OfS) to achieve annual improvement on:

- Proportion of good honours degrees awarded to students from areas least likely to enter higher education (POLAR Q1) – to bring this in line with POLAR Q5 students by 2023/24.
- Proportion of good honours degrees awarded to black students – to bring this in line with white students by 2027/28.

Work underway on the development of UEA's new APP 2025/26 to 2028/29 includes furthering our understanding of the risks to equality of outcomes, including degree classification.

Whilst the OfS APP data set that is used to set and monitor these targets is not yet available for 2022/23 academic year (publication due in March), early indicator internal data shows further action is needed to consistently address the Home UG POLAR Q1 student and black student degree awarding rates; including different rates of differential outcome by School of Study.

There are a significant number of student experience and engagement factors underpinning the degree awarding rate, both classroom and non-classroom related, and the University's APP strategy aims to address these through whole institutional commitment to addressing the issue, the implementation of UEA's Inclusive Education Policy (Curriculum, Assessment, Pedagogy and Environment) and more targeted approaches to developing a sense of belonging and learner identity.

A widening degree awarding gap was identified for students with caring responsibilities, including parents and guardians, in the 2021/22 data for the first time since UEA began tracking this (2019/20). This has been closely monitored and the gap has decreased in 2022/23.

1.4. Degree Classification Profile at Partner Institutions

UEA validates awards delivered at nine partner institutions covering approximately 2,000 students. Figure 4 summarises the percentage of First Class awards at these institutions. Following a fall in 2019/20 the percentage of first class degrees awarded at partner institutions continues to rise.

Fig.4

2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
18%	16%	22%	23%	28%

The relatively small cohorts at partner institutions, mean that small changes in the number of students achieving First Class awards have a large impact on percentages. There have also been changes in the profile of UEA’s partners over this period and standardisation of the award regulations governing partner provision with a number of partners transitioning from bespoke award regulations to the standard UEA regulations. It should also be noted that the changes to UEA award regulations detailed in 1.2 were not introduced in partner regulations until later. The first cohorts of students on three-year degrees who will not have the uplift applied will complete their programmes in academic year 2023/24, which is likely to lead to a fall in the number of firsts awarded.

Figure 5 shows the number and percentage of firsts by individual partner for the last two years. This shows that the increase is driven by two partners, Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts and Colchester Institute. Mountview continue to have extremely high performing students and select students for their prestigious courses through an extensive audition process so a continued high level of performance is in line with expectations. Analysis of Colchester awards doesn’t indicate a particular rise related to specific programmes. West Suffolk College offered a single high achieving top-up degree shown in the 21/22 results; this has shifted in 22/23 due to the broadening of their portfolio of courses.

Partner	21/22		22/23		21/22-22/23 % Point Change
	No of firsts	Firsts as a % of UG awards	No of firsts	Firsts as a % of UG awards	
City College Norwich	46	18%	35	18%	0%
Mountview	45	45%	60	49%	4%
South Essex College	20	27%	18	23%	-4%
SMB College Group	1	2%	2	4%	2%
West Suffolk College	12	67%	12	57%	-10%
Colchester Institute	10	14%	39	31%	17%
Royal Marsden School	3	18%	1	10%	-8%
Total	137	23%	167	28%	5%

2. Assessment and marking practices

2.1. Institutional Approach to Ensure Consistency

UEA marking practices and criteria are governed by the UEA Senate Scales which ensure a consistent approach across the institution, while also permitting subject level variation, where appropriate to allow for Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Subject Benchmark guidance. Marking of all student work is subject to UEA's Moderation Policy and all programmes have external examiner oversight as defined by UEA's External Examiner Code of Practice. These policies are reviewed by the University's Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) to ensure alignment with the latest sector reference points. The latest version of these policies, along with further details around how UEA ensures students are assessed fairly can be found on UEA website at [Marking Fairly \(uea.ac.uk\)](http://uea.ac.uk).

There is an increasing use of Assessment Briefs and marking rubrics in assessment at UEA which are supportive of student achievement and the transparency of marking decisions.

UEA's regulations governing consideration of [Exceptional Circumstances](#) and [Academic Appeals](#) which are subject to regular LTC review, help ensure consistency of approach.

Validated provision at partner institutions is subject to regulations, policies and procedures approved by UEA's LTC, which follow the same key principals as UEA-based provision with some minor adjustments to allow for differences in organisational structures at partner institutions.

The University has noted the [report](#) published by the Office for Students on assessment practices related to marking for spelling, punctuation and grammar, and compared the examples within the report to the UEA [inclusive education policy](#) and assessment guidance. The University has judged that practice is secure as the UEA policy clearly states that: "Marking practice should be shaped by marking criteria, with the secretarial aspects of writing appropriately weighted."

3. Academic governance

3.1. Ensuring Value of Qualifications Over Time and Consistency of Marking Practices

The University's Senate has responsibility for the academic standards of all qualifications awarded by the University. LTC, which reports to Senate, is responsible for the detailed supporting work in ensuring consistency of standards. LTC oversees a number of robust methodologies to provide assurance in regard to consistency of quality and standards of awards over time, both those delivered at UEA and by partner institutions.

Key processes considered by LTC include Annual Module and Course Review, scrutiny of External Examiner reports, and Annual Quality and Enhancement reporting. All these processes provide mechanisms by which any issues in relation to consistency of marking practices or academic standards can be considered and addressed.

Versions of these processes are also in place for awards delivered at partner institutions. The detailed scrutiny of these processes is by a Joint Board of Study (JBOS) for each partner which is chaired by the UEA Associate PVC Apprenticeships and Partnerships and reports to LTC.

Internal quality assurance processes were reviewed during 2016/17 and 2017/18. Externally, the University participates in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and a number of courses are accredited by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) including OFSTED.

LTC and Senate receive annual and other reports to provide assurance that UEA satisfies the OfS Conditions of Registration.

4. Classification algorithms

4.1. Current Degree Algorithm and Communication to Students and Other Stakeholders

UEA's current degree algorithm is included in its [Bachelors and Integrated Masters Award Regulations \(BIM\)](#), available to staff and students. Students have access to support via The Student Information Zone (SIZ) and Academic Advisers to answer any queries related to academic matters, including award regulations.

Degree classification is calculated using students' average marks for their second and final year (Bachelors degrees) and their second, third and final year (Integrated masters) according to the following weighting for standard courses:

Degree	Stage 2 %	Stage 3 %	Stage 4 %
Bachelors degrees	40	60	
Integrated Masters degrees	20	30	50

4.2. Partner Institution Award Regulations

UEA has worked with its partner institutions over recent years to introduce standardisation across award regulations at partners. Students at all of UEA's partners are subject to the UEA Partner Award Regulations, which provide a consistent approach across all partners and UEA.

5. Teaching practices and learning resources

In respect of 2019/20 and 2020/21, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, teaching and learning practice was modified, in that, remote study was introduced to manage periods of National lockdown and to respond to Government guidance regarding Higher Education delivery. Assessments were also facilitated via various appropriate online formats where possible and within any Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies requirements. This move to remote study was strategically developed to ensure standards and quality of learning were maintained and supported student outcomes. For 2021/22 and onwards some of these amended practices were retained and have been enhanced as part of the University's blended learning approach. This approach combines a selection of pedagogical activities and virtual and physical learning environments to maximise students' engagement and understanding and provide an empowering and accessible learning experience. It is directed by our Blended Learning policy which includes lecture capture technology and further underpinned by our Inclusive Education Policy, which aims to maximise the opportunity for success for all students.

The University's [Learning Enhancement Team](#) in Student Services includes roles focused on supporting staff to enhance inclusive practice in learning, teaching and assessment, such as

through our [Inclusivity Network](#), and on the delivery of student inclusion projects as part of the wider, ongoing implementation of the University's Inclusive Education Policy. The team provides a range of resources to support students' and apprentices' learning, helping them to build confidence in academic writing and studying, mathematics and statistics, and studying with specific learning differences.

6. Risks and challenges

6.1. Student Attainment Gap

[UEA's Access and Participation Plan](#) 2020/21 to 2024/25 sets out a detailed plan to close good honours degree awarding gaps for home undergraduate underrepresented and disadvantaged groups of students, specifically between students from Polar4 Q1 and Polar4 Q5 ([About POLAR and Adult HE - Office for Students](#)) and between white and black students. Improvements to outcomes for target groups will be explained by our rigorous approach to the implementation of inclusive practice based on our underpinning [Inclusive Education Policy](#).

In 2022/23 and 2023/24, UEA has been undertaking a rigorous assessment of performance and evidence review regarding equality of opportunities and outcomes at UEA to underpin the development of our new Access and Participation Plan 2025/26 to 2028/29.