

# DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT 2025

The [UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment](#) (UKSCQA) expects Higher Education providers to periodically publish a Degree Outcomes Statement analysing their institutional undergraduate degree classification profile. The publication of a Degree Outcomes Statement is part of a sector-wide commitment to protecting the value and credibility of undergraduate Higher Education qualifications.

Prior to publication, this Degree Outcomes Statement is reviewed through the University's formal academic governance bodies and approved by the Council, following consideration by the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience. The University of Reading's Degree Outcomes Statement outlines the University's approach to marking and assessment, ensuring alignment with the guidance produced by the UKSCQA.

The data analysis below focuses on level 6 qualifications (Bachelor's degrees) and excludes integrated Master's degrees, Master's degrees, and non-classified awards.

Please note that we have altered the population used to produce these figures to align with our internal reporting and HESA returns. Therefore, the figures for historical years will not match those in previously published Degree Outcomes Statements.

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# 1. INSTITUTIONAL DEGREE CLASSIFICATION PROFILE

The University’s degree classification profile (Figure 1 and Table 1) sets out the percentage of degree classes awarded at the institutional level over the last six years for our Bachelor’s degree (Level 6) programmes (2018/19 - 2023/24).

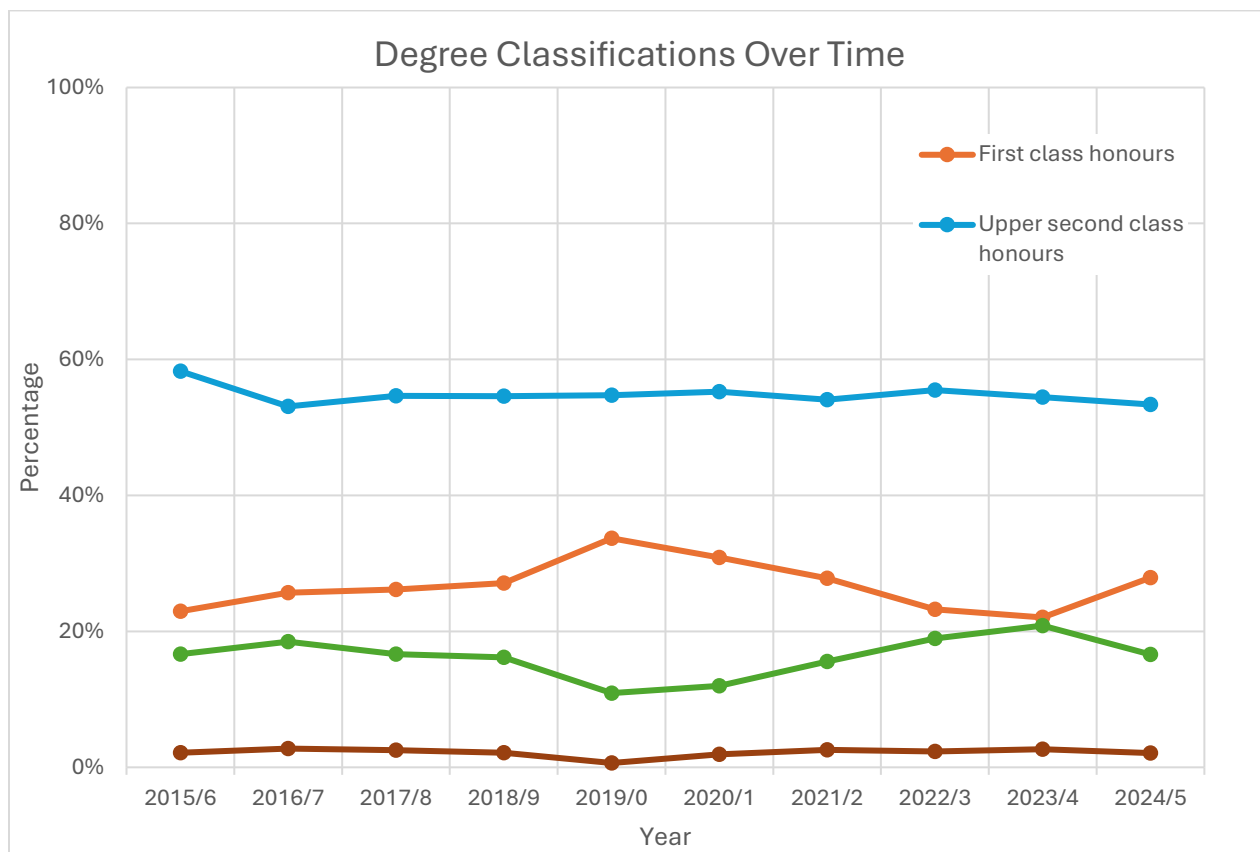


Figure 1: University of Reading Degree Classifications 2015/16 to 2024/25

Academic year	First class honours	Upper second class honours	Lower second class honours	Third class honours/Pass	1st + 2:1 (Good honours)
2015/6	22.9%	58.3%	16.7%	2.1%	81.2%
2016/7	25.7%	53.1%	18.5%	2.8%	78.8%
2017/8	26.1%	54.6%	16.7%	2.5%	80.8%
2018/9	27.1%	54.6%	16.2%	2.1%	81.7%
2019/0	33.7%	54.8%	10.9%	0.6%	88.4%
2020/1	30.9%	55.2%	12.0%	1.9%	86.1%
2021/2	27.8%	54.1%	15.5%	2.5%	81.9%
2022/3	23.2%	55.5%	18.9%	2.3%	78.7%
2023/4	22.0%	54.4%	20.8%	2.7%	76.5%
2024/5	27.9%	53.4%	16.6%	2.1%	81.3%

Table 1: University of Reading Degree Classifications 2015-16 to 2024-25.

The degree outcomes data reflect the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the measures implemented by the University to mitigate its impact on students. The peak in Good Honours awards in 2019/20 (88.4%) and 2020/21 (86.1%) corresponds to the period when a package of measures was introduced, including greater flexibility for exceptional circumstances, weighting pre-pandemic assessments more heavily, and adopting online open-book exams and coursework-focused assessments. These measures were designed to ensure fairness and support for students navigating unprecedented challenges. Importantly, academic standards were maintained during this period, as all students were required to demonstrate sufficient evidence of achievement at the level they were finally awarded. As the University transitioned back to pre-Covid practices from 2021/22 onwards, the Good Honours proportion declined to 76.5% in 2023/24 but rose to 81.3% in 2024/25, alongside an increase in Lower Second Class classifications, rising from 10.9% in 2019/20 to 20.8% in 2023/24 and settling at 16.6% in 2024/25. These shifts highlight the evolving assessment landscape during and after the pandemic, while underscoring the University's commitment to upholding academic standards throughout this period.

### University of Reading Data Insights

- **Subject Area:** There is some variation in the proportion of students achieving First or Upper Seconds within subject areas across this period, but little evidence of trends.
- **Disability Status:** Historically, attainment among disabled and non-disabled students has been broadly similar. Disabled students outperformed their peers in **2019/20 (+0.8 percentage points), 2020/21 (+0.3 ppts), and 2022/23 (+1.4 ppts)**. In 2023/24, the pattern returned to a small negative gap (−0.7 ppts) and further reduced to −0.5ppts in 2024/25, consistent with the more modest differences seen before the pandemic.
- **Ethnicity:** A persistent attainment gap exists between BAME and White students. Historically, the gap has ranged from **9.0 to 15.8 percentage points**, but in 2024/25 it reduced to **7.4 percentage points**, the smallest gap observed across the time series.

The gap between Black and White students has been consistently larger than for other ethnic groups. Between **2021/22 and 2023/24**, the gap widened further to between **23.6 and 26.1 percentage points**. In 2024/25, it narrowed substantially to **15.7 percentage points**, the smallest gap since 2019/20.

- **Gender:** The gender attainment gap has been relatively stable over time, averaging around **7 percentage points** in favour of women since 2015/16. In 2024/25, the gap narrowed to **5.0 percentage points**, the smallest difference across the period.
- **Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD):** The IMD attainment gap widened steadily between 2018/19 and 2023/24, reaching a peak of **−12.7 percentage points** in 2023/24. In 2024/25, the gap narrowed markedly to **−4.9 percentage points**, the smallest difference across the whole period.
- **Neighbourhoods with Lower Participation in Higher Education (POLAR4):** The POLAR4 gap has fluctuated considerably over time. Students from the lowest-participation neighbourhoods outperformed their highest-participation peers in **2015/16, 2018/19 and 2022/23**. In 2024/25, the gap was **−2.1 percentage points**, broadly in line with typical values once these years are excluded.

The University prioritises closing awarding gaps related to ethnicity, deprivation, and gender. Through its [Access and Participation Plan](#), the University targets awarding gaps by setting specific goals for minority ethnic students (including Black students), those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and mature learners, and by implementing evidence-based interventions to improve access, continuation, and progression for these groups. This work is supported by inclusive teaching practices, the Awarding Gap Toolkit, targeted staff training, and commitments such as the Race Equality Charter, all of which help

embed systemic change to close gaps related to ethnicity, deprivation, and gender across programmes and departments.

### Comparison with the HE Sector

Using the most recently published HESA data (2024/25) for comparison against performance in the sector, the University's awards of First Class degrees continue to be slightly below the sector average (26.8% vs. 30%). This is balanced by a higher proportion of Upper Second Class degrees (54.5% vs. 49%). The proportion of Lower Second Class degrees awarded (16.7%) is below the sector average (19%). The University also awards fewer Third Class/Pass degrees (2% vs. 3%).

**Please note** that the University of Reading figures used below are drawn from HESA returns, and so include Integrated Master's programmes but exclude non-UK based provision (with figures quoted elsewhere limited to Level 6 programmes including non-UK based provision).

Year	First Class	Upper Second Class	Lower Second Class	Third Class/Pass
2015/6	24 (23)	57.3 (49)	16.6 (22)	2.2 (5)
2016/7	26.1 (26)	53 (49)	18.4 (20)	2.5 (5)
2017/8	26.8 (28)	54.9 (48)	15.9 (19)	2.4 (5)
2018/9	27.7 (28)	54.2 (48)	15.9 (19)	2.2 (4)
2019/0	34.2 (35)	55.1 (47)	10.3 (15)	0.5 (3)
2020/1	31.3 (36)	55.5 (46)	11.5 (14)	1.8 (3)
2021/2	26.5 (32)	55.6 (47)	15.4 (17)	2.5 (4)
2022/3	22.8 (30)	56.6 (48)	18.6 (20)	2 (3)
2023/4	20 (29)	56 (48)	21.6 (20)	2.4 (3)
2024/5	26.8 (30)	54.5 (49)	16.7 (19)	2 (3)

Table 2: Percentage of first degree qualifiers obtaining each classification. **Reading (Sector)**

## 2. ASSESSMENT AND MARKING PRACTICES

### Alignment with National Standards

The requirements for the University's awards and the learning outcomes of its programmes align with the regulatory sector-recognised standards for English degrees set by the Office for Students. The development of degree programmes also draws on the Quality Assurance Agency's Subject Benchmark Statements as a key reference point. Additionally, accredited degree programmes meet the requirements of their respective Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

### Assessment Criteria and Moderation

Assessment criteria are designed to evaluate whether a student has achieved the relevant learning outcomes for an assessment and provide transparency in marking. These criteria are consistent across the University and supported by internal moderation, where a second marker reviews a sample of work to ensure consistency. Major assessments, such as dissertations, are often double-marked.

### Criterion-reference assessment

The University uses criterion-referenced assessment, meaning student work is evaluated against published marking criteria and learning outcomes rather than ranked against peers. The University does not use norm-referencing or scaling to adjust marks, ensuring that students' grades reflect the absolute standard of their achievement rather than relative cohort performance.

### External Examiners

External Examiners, who are independent academics or practitioners, play a vital role in assuring the consistency and fairness of the University's assessment processes. They provide oversight of curricula, assessment design, marking standards, and award decisions. Their annual reports confirm alignment with national standards and inform continuous improvement.

### Support for staff

The University supports academic staff in their marking and assessment practices through a range of professional development and training, including the academic practice programme for new lecturers. It also offers an induction session for its incoming External Examiners.

The University's policies and procedures for awards and assessment are set out in the [Assessment Handbook](#).

## Exceptional circumstances

Where a student's performance is affected by illness or other significant adverse circumstances, the University mitigates the impact on assessment through its Exceptional Circumstances Policy, which provides measures such as extensions to deadlines and opportunities to take assessments at a later date. From 2025/26 onwards, this supportive approach continues under the new Assessment Adjustments policy, which replaces the previous framework and will be monitored to ensure it continues to effectively reduce the impact of such circumstances on students' assessments.

## Appeals

Students are able to appeal against their overall result in the Final or a Part Examination, their module mark, or an exceptional circumstances decision. An annual report on appeals is considered by the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience and a summary detailing findings is submitted to the Senate.

## 3. ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

The University's governance structure ensures robust oversight of academic standards. The Council, as the governing body, receives an Annual Learning and Teaching Report and is responsible for assuring the standards of the University's awards. The Senate oversees the direction of education and assessment, supported by the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (UBTLSE). Key governance functions include:

- **UBTLSE:** Monitors classification and progression rates and reviews External Examiners' reports.
- **University Programmes Board (UPB):** Oversees programme approvals and amendments to ensure alignment with national standards.
- **External Scrutiny:** External panellists are appointed to key quality processes, ensuring independent oversight.

The University Awarding Board is responsible for recommending to Senate the award of degrees and other qualifications, and the University Progression Board is responsible for progression decisions.

Programmes delivered at our international branch campuses and those delivered in collaboration with a partner organisation are managed within the same governance framework as the rest of our provision.

Through these processes, the University ensures that it fulfils Office for Students requirements.

## 4. CLASSIFICATION ALGORITHM

The University's standard classification algorithm for Bachelor's degrees, together with variants for four-year Bachelor's degrees, is available in the Assessment Handbook.

The standard classification is based on a weighted average of module marks for Parts 2 and 3 of the degree programme, with double weighting for Part 3 modules. Where a student's overall average falls within a 2% borderline below a classification boundary above the Pass threshold, the algorithm takes account of final-year performance and the profile of marks across Parts 2 and 3.

The University allows students who have failed their Part or Final Examination to have one resit attempt at all modules which they have failed. Resit marks are capped at 40 for the purposes of classification.

The University-wide classification algorithm was first introduced in 2002/3 and was amended in 2006/7 with the effect of increasing its stringency. In 2020/21, the classification algorithm was again reviewed, in accordance with a recommendation agreed as part of the Degree Outcomes Statement 2020, and limited changes were introduced which have the effect of:

- Allowing finalists not qualifying for an Honours degree at first attempt the opportunity to resit for an Honours degree, subject to the capping of resit module marks (with effect for the final year cohort in 2021/22 and thereafter)
- Amending the criteria for Pass degree to the achievement of an overall weighted average within the range of 35-39.9 and 60 credits in the Final Part with marks of at least 40 (with effect for entrants from the 2022/23 academic session)

The changes detailed above will not have a material effect on the proportion of First and Upper Second class degrees awarded, but serve to align the University's practices in relation to the Pass threshold and Finalist resitters more closely to sector norms.

The stability of the classification algorithm helps to maintain the standard of the University's awards and to ensure their comparability over time. The University keeps it under review, and is confident that it is rigorous, fair and consistent with common practice in the higher education sector.

## 5. TEACHING PRACTICES AND LEARNING RESOURCES

The University of Reading's teaching practices are guided by a Curriculum Framework that ensures programmes are inclusive, research-informed, and progressively challenging. This Framework promotes innovation in teaching and assessment, with a focus on authentic assessment and constructive feedback practices that reflect the needs of individual disciplines.

Investments in learning resources continue to play a significant role in supporting positive outcomes for students. Enhancements to digital learning platforms such as Blackboard, and the introduction of Learning Capture technology have improved access to learning materials and flexibility in study, contributing to higher levels of student satisfaction and attainment. Subject-specific facilities, including specialised laboratories and unique collections such as the Cole Museum of Zoology, provide students with the resources needed to develop both technical and academic skills.

Programmes are also designed to integrate research-informed teaching and real-world learning opportunities, which contribute to the development of graduate attributes that are reflected in degree

outcomes. Initiatives such as the Reading Internship Scheme (RIS), fieldwork, placements, and real-world projects help students achieve deeper levels of engagement and academic performance.

The University has also enhanced student support systems, including the Academic Tutor System and the Life Tools programme, which provide tailored guidance to students throughout their studies. These support mechanisms are important in enabling students to overcome challenges and achieve successful academic outcomes, as evidenced by sustained levels of Good Honours awards across programmes.

## 6. IDENTIFYING GOOD PRACTICE AND ACTIONS

The University's assessment and classification processes are rigorous, fair, and make effective use of External Examiners. As part of our quality assurance and enhancement efforts, we conduct an annual thematic review of External Examiner reports to highlight good practice for wider dissemination and identify common issues requiring attention.

In 2024/25, External Examiners commended several areas, including:

- The quality and relevance of assessment and delivery, including authentic and practice-based assessment tasks, well-structured module documentation and VLE organisation, and strong integration of theory and application across programmes.
- Robust marking, feedback and moderation practices, with clear use of rubrics, detailed and developmental feedback (including innovative approaches such as voice-recorded comments), and transparent moderation processes that supported fairness and consistency.
- Exceptional academic and pastoral support, highlighted through students' positive experiences of staff communication, accessible resources, mentoring structures, and, in several cases, thoughtful guidance on appropriate and ethical use of generative AI.

The University has revised its periodic review of programmes, introducing the [PEER](#) process, which emphasises enhancement and alignment with the requirements of the Office for Students.

During 2024/25, the University continued to explore the opportunities presented by generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, for enhancing the student academic experience while safeguarding academic standards. Comprehensive guidance for staff and students has been developed, and the security of varied assessment methods is being actively monitored to ensure they accurately measure student achievement against programme learning outcomes.

Above all, the University is committed to enabling all students to achieve successful outcomes, both in their academic performance and progression to graduate-level employment. Data are continuously analysed to identify disparities in outcomes across student groups, and targeted actions and interventions are implemented to address these where appropriate.

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