

Degree Outcomes Statement

University of Northampton

2019/20 – 2023/24

1. Summary and scope

- 1.1. This Degree Outcomes Statement (DOS) is published to provide assurance to the governing body of the University, to the public, and to the Office for Students, that the University of Northampton maintains a proactive and thorough approach to the monitoring and maintenance of quality and standards, and that this is realised in the consistency and rigour of the outcomes achieved by students.
- 1.2. Specifically, the DOS provides statistical data on the distribution of degree outcomes at undergraduate level, and narrative context about the processes by which the University retains confidence in the value and consistency of these outcomes.
- 1.3. The data in this DOS relate specifically to outcomes for students studying on undergraduate courses delivered directly by the University of Northampton, and do not include data relating to students at partner institutions.

2. Institutional degree classification profile 2019/20 – 2023/24

- 2.1. The table below shows the distribution of undergraduate degrees awarded to students at the University of Northampton between the 2019/20 and 2023/24 academic years:

Academic year	No. of classified Degrees	1 st	2:1	2:2	3rd
2023/24	1980	25.9%	42.0%	28.1%	3.9%
2022/23	1987	24.4%	44.5%	28.0%	3.1%
2021/22	2298	25.4%	40.6%	24.8%	9.1%
2020/21	2282	30.2%	45.8%	19.6%	4.3%
2019/20	2268	28.2%	43.8%	22.0%	5.9%

- 2.2. These data show that the percentage range of 'good degrees' (usually defined as First Class and Upper Second Class honours degrees) awarded by the University of Northampton remains both internally consistent between academic years, and within sector norms.

- 2.3. In specific relation to these data, it should be noted that adjustments were made to the University's regulations, including a revised algorithm for degree classifications, in the 2019/20¹ academic year, in response to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It was subsequently decided to maintain those algorithms for students graduating in the 2020/21² and 2021/22³ academic years. This accounts for a higher-than-usual percentage of First and Upper Second class honours degrees in 2019/20 and 2020/21 in particular.
- 2.4. Notwithstanding the emergency adjustments described above, the algorithm used for degree classification calculations during the period described in the table had been in place for many years, using a letter grade system. Classifications were derived from Level 5 and Level 6 modules (weighted according to credit value) as follows:
- The grade for the principal module (dissertation or equivalent module).
 - The highest grades from the remaining Level 6 modules (making 100 credits in total including the principal module) which will be double weighted.
 - The highest grades from remaining Level 6 module(s) and Level 5 modules where taken together, amounting to a further 100 credits.
- 2.5. The University changed its Academic Regulations for **new** undergraduate students who started their courses from September 2024 onwards. The regulations which apply to those students include two substantial changes in the calculation of undergraduate degree classifications: firstly, a move from grade-based assessment outcomes to numerical (percentage) marks, and secondly, a change to the algorithm so that all Level 5 and Level 6 modules are included in the calculation, with Level 6 modules counted double. This change was made in the interests of clarity and transparency. Any impact on the spread of classifications arising from the changed algorithm will not become apparent until September 2024 entrants have completed their courses.

3. **Academic governance**

- 3.1. The University operates a structure of Module Boards and Award and Status Boards for the calibration and confirmation of students' outcomes. External Examiners contribute to the setting and moderation of assessment tasks. An annual Reflective Board of Examiners, again with external input, considers comparability of standards and outcomes over time, across subject areas, and in relation to protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.2. External Examiners in each subject area produce an annual report, used to identify actions and improvements at all levels of the University. The set of External Examiners' reports

¹ [Academic and Supplementary Regulations for 2019/20](#)

² [Academic and Supplementary Regulations for 2020/21](#)

³ [Academic and Supplementary Regulations for 2021/22](#)

relating to the most recent period covered by this DOS (the 2023/24 academic year) notes a 98.4% positivity rating in responses to questions about maintaining academic standards.

- 3.3. The University has an overall framework for the assurance and enhancement of academic quality, which is published as the Northampton Quality Assurance Framework. It comprises a mixture of regular monitoring, periodic subject review, validation of changed and newly-developed courses, and feedback from both External Examiners and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). The University's Annual Report on Quality and Standards provides benchmarks for the outcomes of the University's quality assurance processes by making comparisons with previous years, comparing the standard of student outcomes on a subject-by-subject basis, and the effectiveness of the University's processes for course approval and review by comparison to outcomes in the wider HE sector. The Annual Report for the 2023/24 academic year concluded that consistent outcomes from these processes across years provided ongoing assurances regarding the setting and maintenance of academic standards.
- 3.4. Overall assurance of academic quality and standards is provided to the Board of Governors via Senate, the University's most senior internal committee. The Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) reports into Senate and holds the detailed oversight of the processes and outcomes which support the University's maintenance and enhancement of academic quality. Since early 2024, AQSC has been overseeing a review of the University's quality assurance and quality enhancement processes, with the aim of delivering a more transparently data-driven and risk-based approach. A recent outcome from this review has been the development of a new continuous monitoring process, replacing the previous system of annual review, which uses live data and known reference points in the ongoing assurance of quality and the tracking of identified actions for improvement. AQSC will continue to oversee the delivery of this new process and will receive recommendations and reports for further improvements to other aspects of the University's quality framework.

4. **Teaching and assessment practice**

- 4.1. The University has a published Learning and Teaching Strategy for the period 2024 to 2027. It has the objectives of developing an inclusive academic community of staff and students, innovation through the development of flexible and accessible learning models, and an ongoing commitment to supporting students by strengthening the environment for learning and teaching.
- 4.2. The Strategy is underpinned by an Integrated Learning Support model and a coordinated approach to Personal Academic Tutoring. This provides students with a connected and programme-focussed support model throughout their studies.
- 4.3. The University has a published Assessment and Feedback Policy which provides the framework for assessment design, feedback and feedforward for students, clarity of

assessment briefs, and guidance on the use of generative Artificial Intelligence in assessment.

4.4. Delivery of each of the above items is informed by the data and action-planning which underpins the University's Access and Participation Plan. The Plan takes a risk-based approach through the analysis of nationally-published data via the Office for Students and the National Student Survey, and the University's internal data, within the context of the sector risks identified in the Office for Students' Equality of Opportunity Risk Register. Amongst the Plan's objectives, and in specific relation to Degree Outcomes, is a reduction in the awarding gap between White and Global Ethnic Majority (GEM) students, and monitoring of awarding gaps between students from the most and least socio-economically deprived backgrounds. Through the delivery of the APP, the University monitors the value and outcomes of interventions which are designed to address these gaps.

5. **Summary**

5.1. The data and supporting information in this DOS can provide assurance that the University takes a thorough and robust approach to the maintenance of academic standards, and that these are reflected in student outcomes. These will continue to be monitored in the light of the strategic mechanisms described in section 4 above, and with particular regard to the changed Academic Regulations as described in section 2 above.

Gavin Barber
Academic Registrar
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