University of Sheffield Degree Outcomes Statement

Purpose of the statement

The University of Sheffield is an autonomous Higher Education provider holding university title and degree awarding powers under the UK's Higher Education and Research Act 2017. The University is responsible for setting and maintaining the academic standards and quality of its degrees and other qualifications. The purpose of this statement is to present information on how the University monitors and manages the academic standards of undergraduate awards at Levels 4-6 of the Framework of Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-awarding bodies (FHEQ). The statement aims to meet the expectations of the UK Standing Committee on Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) to ensure transparency, reliability and fairness in relation to the outcomes for University of Sheffield students.

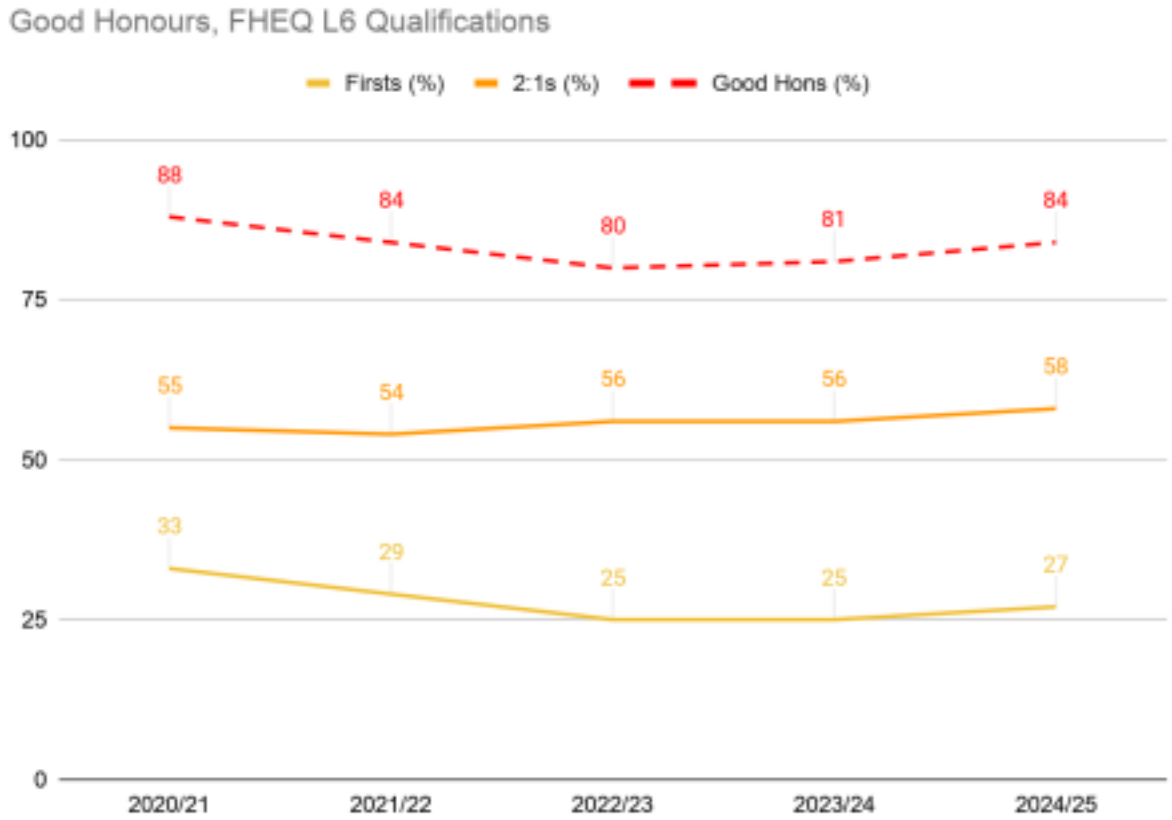
1. Institutional degree classification profile

The institutional degree classification profile for FHEQ Level 6 is provided below. It sets out the percentage of degree classes awarded at the institutional level over the last 5 years.

Over this period the latest data compared with 2020/21 show a 3.4 percentage point decrease in good honours degrees awarded with a 6.3 percentage point decrease in first class degrees awarded. Covid mitigations introduced in 2019/20 increased the trend of both good honours and first class honours awarded, which continued into 2020/21 as students affected by the pandemic completed their studies. These mitigations were phased out completely in subsequent years, returning the proportion of good honours and first class honours awarded to pre-pandemic levels in 2022/23 and 2023/24, with a small increase seen in 2024/25.

Year	Number of Awards	Good Honours	1st	2:1	2:2	3rd/Pass
2020/21	3625	87.6%	32.9%	54.7%	10.6%	1.9%
2021/22	3286	83.6%	29.4%	54.3%	13.8%	2.6%
2022/23	3931	80.3%	24.5%	55.8%	18.4%	1.3%
2023/24	4127	80.6%	24.4%	56.2%	18.0%	1.4%
2024/25	4091	84.2%	26.6%	57.5%	14.8%	1.0%

Information Classification: Public



The University routinely analyses degree attainment gaps for a range of student characteristics. Analysis of attainment rates (percentage of full time, first degree students achieving 1st or 2:1s) has identified:

- A sustained attainment gap between White and BAME students. The gap is particularly pronounced amongst Black students, at 19% in 2024-25, although a narrowing of the gap has been seen over the last 3 years, from 22% to 21% to the current 19%. A similar trend has been seen for Asian students, with a current gap of 8%, from 11% and 14% in 2023-24 and 2022-23, respectively.
- Students from Mixed backgrounds now have parity in attainment outcomes. ● In 2024-25 students from IMD Q1 have an attainment gap 11.2% lower than those in IMD Q5, compared to 7% in 2020-21. Progress to close the gap has reversed. This is reflected in the national trends.

The University's Access and Participation Plan 2020-25 sets out the targets and strategic measures that the University is taking to ensure that these attainment gaps are reduced and will be monitored by the Office for Students. Data sourced from the OfS Access and participation data dashboard.

Information Classification: Public

2. Assessment and marking practices

The University makes active use of sector reference points including the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), subject benchmark statements and the QAA Code of Practice in developing its programmes, its assessment and associated regulations and its policies and guidance.

The University uses an institution-wide set of outcomes criteria for FHEQ Levels 4-7. This forms the framework within which departments publish and use both level and task specific assessment criteria for each major assessment type and the descriptors for degree classifications.

University policies, procedures and guidance are in place to ensure that the marking process is fair and reliable. Use of standard university marking criteria ensures that assessments are aligned with the agreed framework, and this, along with consistent application of the Moderation and Sampling Policy, ensures equitable and reliable marking practices across modules and programmes. Together with supporting policies and guidance such as anonymous marking and exam board oversight, assurance of a consistent and robust approach is provided. Comprehensive support and training on assessment and marking practices is available to academic staff.

Appropriately qualified external examiners are appointed for every taught programme of study to ensure that the methods of assessment used are credible, rigorous, equitable and are fairly and consistently conducted within relevant University regulations and policies. Feedback and recommendations made by external examiners feed into the University's quality and standards review processes.

The University takes an equitable and consistent approach to maintain academic integrity and fairness to other students when dealing with requests for extenuating circumstances to be taken into consideration for matters relating to examinations and assessments (e.g. extensions to deadlines or progression and award decisions made by Examination Boards). Clear information is made available to students on how to report extenuating circumstances that have impacted assessment and how the University considers these.

3. Academic governance

Council, as the University's governing body, has oversight of the degree classifications awarded and trends through reports from Senate (via the Senate Education Committee). Senate has responsibility for the academic governance of the University and is supported by a number of committees including the Education Committee. Via this route the institutional overview of degree classifications and any trends are considered and policies, guidance and procedures relating to learning, teaching and assessment are developed and approved.

At Faculty level, Faculty Education Committees (FECs) have an important role in education governance, including the provision of oversight of School proposals for Programme Approvals, ensuring that their programme portfolio is of high quality and is delivered to the University's academic standards. With attendees from all Schools within the faculty, FECs have responsibility for cultivating a consistent approach to

education strategy, processes and practices whilst fostering a shared understanding of the importance of effective education

governance. Consistent application of key policies and processes are also supported by Student Administration and Academic Affairs, who offer advice on the interpretation of regulations and policies to Schools. This includes attendance at exam boards, where knowledge and expertise in the application of regulations contributes to maintaining quality and upholding academic integrity.

At programme level, external examiners' reports provide key assurances that marking practices are being followed and standards upheld. In addition to Faculty review and use of the reports in routine quality processes such as Annual Reflection, an overview report is produced annually for the Academic Programme Quality and Standards Committee (a sub-committee of the Senate Education Committee) which brings together the findings from the reports and identifies any issues for consideration at an institutional level.

4. Classification algorithms

Between the 2006-07 and 2022-23 academic sessions the University used a unified institution-wide algorithm for degree classifications, following work to enhance consistency in response to QAA institutional audit recommendations. In summary:

- The grades awarded in Year 2 and 3 count towards the degree calculation, with grades awarded in Year 3 having twice the weight of grades awarded in Year 2; ● The student must have been awarded sufficient credit in Years 2 and 3 to be eligible for a classified degree.
- Two calculations are used: the weighted mean grade and the distribution of weighted mean grades.
- Where the *weighted mean grade* and the *distribution of weighted grades* both indicate the same class of degree, this is the class of degree awarded. Where one of these calculations indicates a particular class of degree, but the other places the student in the borderline range to that class, they will be awarded the higher class. However, should one calculation indicate a particular class of degree but the other indicates the class below, the student will become a borderline candidate to the higher class. Or if both calculations place the student in the borderline range to a higher class they will also become a borderline candidate to the higher class. In both borderline situations the class of degree awarded will be decided by the Examination Board with reference to the weighted mean grade of the modules studied during the final year.

During the 2022-23 session the University reviewed its degree classification algorithm in line with the guiding principles laid out in the UKSCQA Principles for Effective Degree Algorithm Design. As a result, a number of changes were made, including the move from two calculations to a single calculation, in line with the recommended approach. The new algorithm was used for calculation of all awards from the 2023-24 session onwards. In summary:

- The grades awarded at FHEQ Level 5 and 6 count towards the degree calculation, with grades awarded at FHEQ Level 5 weighted at 33.3% and grades awarded at FHEQ Level 6 weighted at 66.7%;
- The student must have been awarded sufficient credit at FHEQ Level 5 and above to be eligible for a classified degree.

- One calculation is used: the weighted mean grade.
- A borderline of 1.5% below each grade boundary exists for each classification. Where the weighted mean grade places the student in the borderline range to a higher class, an uplift will be made where marks for at least 50% of the contributing credits are also in the higher class.

The implementation of the changes to the University's degree classification algorithm have been delivered with careful consideration of the impact on students, the classification profile and maintaining the value of our awards over time. The University General Regulations for First Degrees set out the approach in full. The method used is available on the University student-facing web pages, and is also explained to students in course handbooks and materials provided by their academic department.

At FHEQ Level 4 a student may resit a failed module on up to two further attempts and the result is capped at the pass mark (40). At FHEQ Level 5 or 6 a student may resit a failed module once and the result is capped at the pass mark.

5. Teaching practices and learning resources

The University continues to enhance the quality of teaching, resources and academic practice to provide our students with opportunities to reach their potential. Examples of developments that have contributed to a positive impact on our student outcomes include:

- 301 Academic Skills provides an extensive programme of workshops and 1:1 appointments for all students at all levels of study. There is also a curated package of online study skills guidance within StudySkills@Sheffield, drawing together resources from across a range of university services, ensuring a joined up study skills offer is presented to students. This includes support for exam revision, exam technique and other forms of assessment. 301 has a programme of Level Up Your Academic Skills resources, including one for Apprentices. This is a series of web-based courses, each aimed at a specific level of study and presented in a week by week format which matches the skills students are likely to need as they transition into and progress through the semester and into exams and other forms of assessment. This includes guidance on using Generative AI in assessment.
- Elevate provides guidance and development opportunities for all staff who teach and support learning. Through the enhancement of teaching practice at individual and programme level, Elevate contributes to a high quality learning experience for all students. The Elevate programme includes:
    - 'Getting Started' resources

○ Bespoke teaching and curriculum design workshops
○ Digital Tools guidance including digital accessibility and online exams ○ Sheffield Teaching Assistant workshops for graduate teaching assistants
○ The Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching for Learning in Higher Education for early career academics
○ The Learning and Teaching Professional Recognition Scheme which supports staff at all levels to gain Advance HE recognition for their teaching practice ○ Targeted support for Schools facing particular challenges in education ● The University transitioned to a new Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in the 2025-26 academic year. This continues to provide students with accessible

resources, learning and assessment tools and information about their course in a user-friendly interface. An institutional VLE template ensures students have a consistent experience across all our courses. This includes the Core Essentials framework which provides a set of criteria for how we use digital technologies to complement, support and improve our teaching.

- The University has expected standards for inclusive education to ensure that students have a consistent learning experience across all programmes, particularly around the way programme information is provided.
- The University's Library provides high quality services to students, receiving a 93.6% positivity rating in the 2025 NSS survey for 'How well have the library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) supported your learning?', almost 3% above sector average and ranked 6th in the UUK.
- The University continues to develop mechanisms for student feedback through systems like TELL US, the programme and module feedback system, and are embedding the insight it gives into the annual reflection process and using it to help understanding of how well a range of initiatives are working.

6. Identifying good practice and actions

The Education Pillar of the University's Vision (2020-2027) makes a commitment to deliver research-led degree programmes that will inspire, enthuse and challenge a diverse community of outstanding students. This is underpinned by 3 priority areas: portfolio, employability and digital experience.

- The portfolio element focuses on the continued review of the University's degree portfolio to ensure that it meets student, employer and research needs. It builds upon the successful programme level approach that has put the student perspective at the forefront of programme design and uses a holistic rather than modular approach so that students get the most out of their learning.
- The development of Sheffield Graduate Attributes and the implementation of MySkills is supporting students at the University to reflect on the skills they are gaining and their personal development in a way that is unique to the sector. This continues to enhance the degree outcomes in addition to degree classification awarded providing students with the skills, attributes

Information Classification: Public

and abilities to secure the outcomes they seek and manage their onward careers with confidence.

- A new digital system to enhance the sharing of Learning Support Plans for students who are supported by our Disability and Dyslexia Support Service has been introduced. This system has improved the experience of our disabled students by ensuring that all staff members who support a student's teaching and learning are aware of and implementing the support recommendations and adjustments they need to perform their best.
- Every year the University invests approximately £15 million into its digital learning environment that is backed by a new technology enabled strategic framework. The framework is there to make sure the transformational change of our digital capabilities are aligned with the University vision. This ensures the provision of a multifaceted and inclusive digital teaching and learning environment. There has also been a review and redesign of on-campus study spaces in collaboration with students.

Information Classification: Public