

# Degree Outcomes Statement

## 1 Introduction

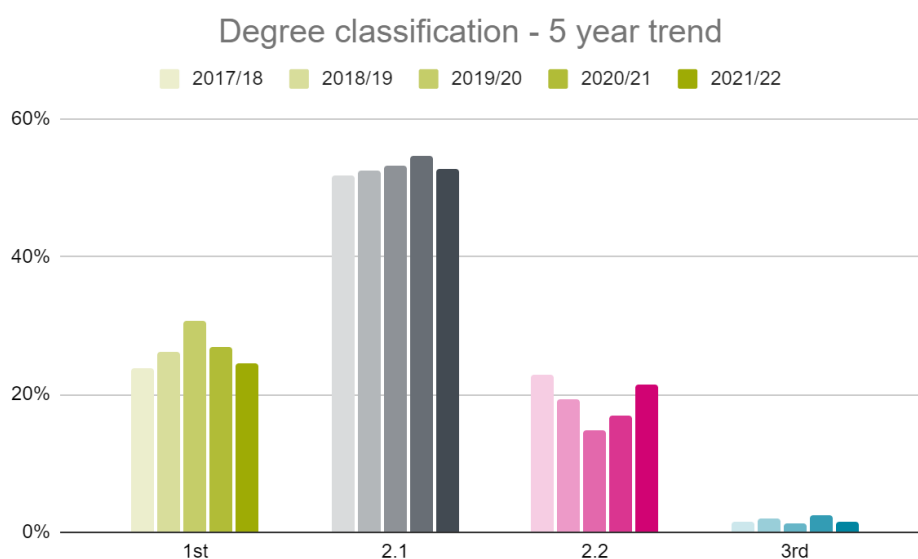
The Oxford Brookes Degree Outcomes Statement (DOS) was first published in 2020, in line with the [statement of intent](#) issued by the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) in 2019. The statement has been updated in line with the [renewed sector commitment](#) to protecting the value of UK degrees, which was published by Universities UK in 2022. The focus of the DOS is students studying in the UK for level 6 awards, i.e. Bachelor's degrees; and it is based on the University's degree outcomes profile from 2017-18 to 2021-22, using data extracted from the using data extracted from the University business intelligence tools, SMART and Argos. A range of data was reviewed in putting together the statement, split by a range of factors in order to give a broad overview of the outcomes for students studying in the UK for Oxford Brookes awards of Bachelor's degrees (on campus and at ACP partner colleges). The data underpinning the charts in the DOS is included in the appendix.

The population was limited to graduates leaving with Bachelor's degrees with Honours, and who studied in the UK. The data were split by study institution (on-campus and ACP), study mode (full time and part time), fee status (home and international), domicile (UK and international). Data were also extracted for all study modes, institutions, domiciles and fee statuses as a point of comparison. Ethnicity for all study institutions, study modes, fee statuses and domiciles was also examined.

## 2 Institutional degree classification profile

### Overall picture

Table 1



Across the University overall, there had been a steady increase in the award of good degrees (1st class and 2.1) until 2019/20, with a corresponding fall in the proportion of lower second class awards

made. This trend appears to have reversed in 2020/21 and 2021/22, with the degree outcomes profile returning to a similar picture as that in 2017/18. The proportion of third class awards has remained relatively consistent (at very low levels) across the reporting period.

### Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

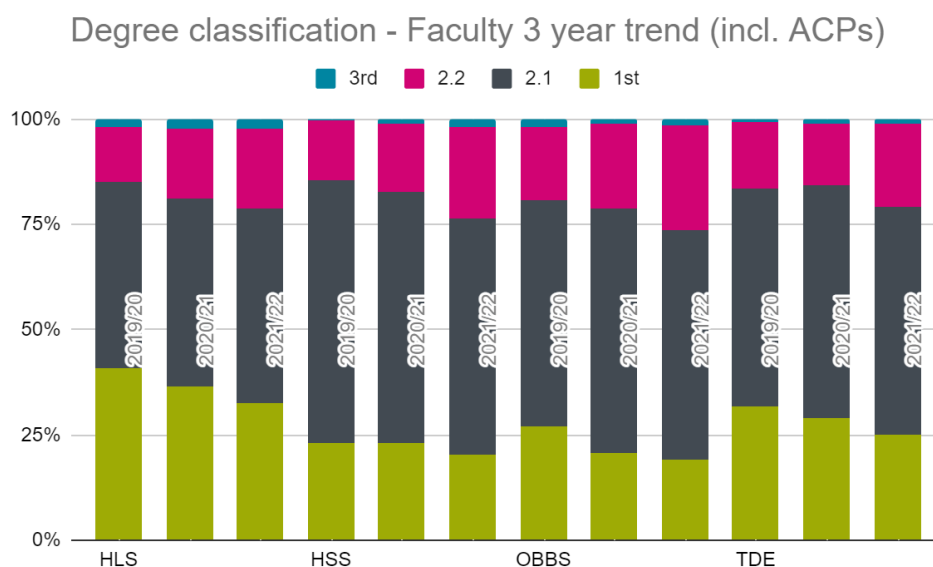
In response to the impact of the global pandemic on our students' learning experiences, the University introduced an "Assessment Adjustment Policy" in June 2020. The aim of the policy was to ensure students were not academically disadvantaged by the relatively sudden and necessary changes to the learning materials and assessment methods that were introduced while restrictions were in place on in person activities, or by the disruption that all students experienced as a result of COVID-19.

Unlike some institutions, who chose to extrapolate potential student performance on the basis of activities completed prior to the impact of the pandemic, often referred to as "No detriment" policies, Oxford Brookes chose only to award credit and marks for work completed. Broadly, if students were deemed to have been academically disadvantaged by the pandemic measures, they were given the choice to either discount their grades from this period, or to attempt to improve their performance by taking a re-sit.

Students were deemed eligible (i.e. had been demonstrably negatively impacted) if their performance in Semester 2 (following the application of government-enforced social restrictions) was lower than the 'standard mark' of the previous semester. Where this was the case, students had the choice to either: 1) accept their grade; 2) choose to take an uncapped re-sit; or 3) choose an ungraded pass. If students had failed a module, either 1) a compensated pass could be applied, or 2) the option to take an uncapped re-sit. Essentially, the University would not give credit or marks for work that had not been completed, but would allow students to either accept their performance or attempt the assessment again in improved circumstances. This approach was not a common approach in the sector and may be one explanation as to why the University has not seen the type of "grade inflation" over the pandemic-impacted period that has been reported by the OfS, and which has led to the perceived need to reinforce government confidence in the standards of awards made over the last 3 years.

### Faculty by Faculty

Table 2



There is a broadly similar trend in degree outcomes when considered by broad subject area (analysed at Faculty level) to the profile shown at University level. The Faculties award similar proportions of good degrees, although there is a notably higher proportion of first class degrees awarded in the Faculty of Health & Life Sciences. The increase was attributed to the impact of a

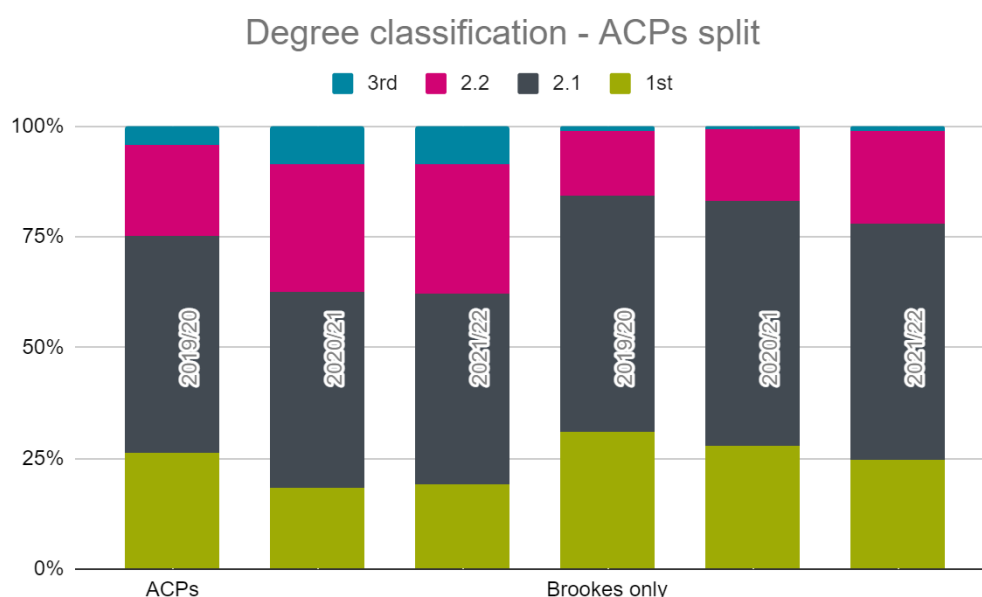
change in assessment practice approximately five years ago, when the grading of practice was introduced into the assessment regime of Nursing programmes. Practice elements make up 50% of the learning experience on these programmes, but was previously simply given a pass/fail grade and did not contribute to module grades. The changes were made to practice grading so that students would place more value on placement learning, and to help drive up the quality of practice education. We have found that many students achieve high grades in placement, and this has substantially increased the number of good awards. The phenomenon of practice colleagues awarding high grades was widely reported by a number of providers across the sector; and to address the inflation in degree classifications, the contribution of practice assessments to the module grade was reduced to 20% of the assessment weighting (with the approval of the Nursing and Midwifery Council) from the 2021 intake.

### Attainment of specific groups

Particular groups of students appear to be achieving fewer 'good' degrees than others, for example: international (non EU) students; Associate College Partnership students; Black and Asian students; and part-time students all graduate with a higher proportion of 2.2 and 3rd class awards. The University's Access and Participation Group and its associated Inclusive Curriculum Enhancement Group have established a planned programme of work for addressing the degree outcomes differential for all these student groups over the period 2020-25, as detailed in the University's Access and Participation Plan. The outcomes of the Access and Participation Plan are currently being reviewed by the APG, with the aim to implement all revisions within an updated plan - covering the period 2024-28 - which will be submitted in July 2023.

### *Associate College Partnership*

*Table 3*

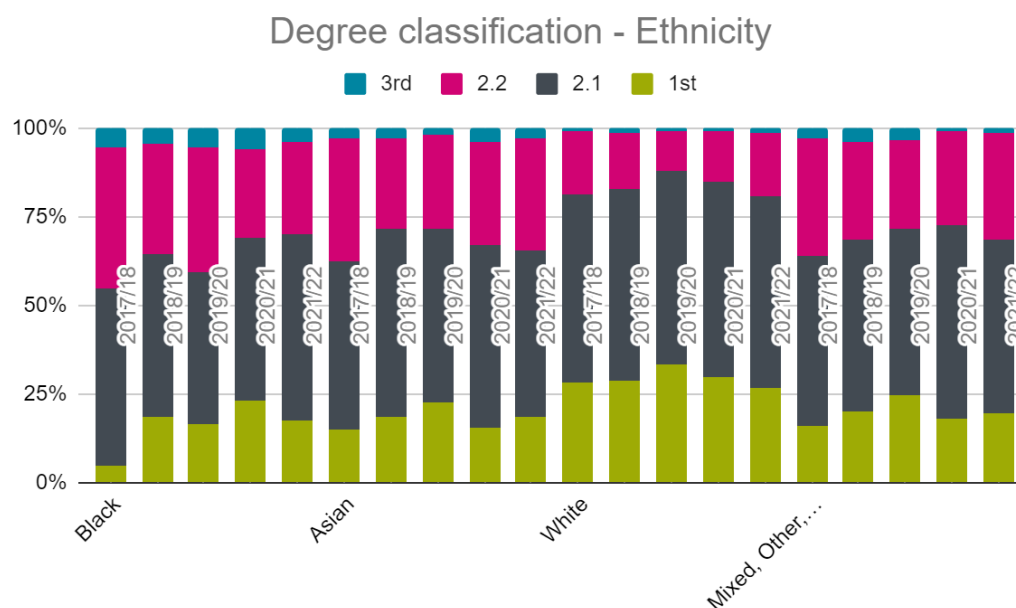


For students taking Brookes programmes at Associate College Partnership colleges, the degree classification profile shows a smaller proportion of the cohorts achieving first and upper second class degrees when compared to those studying at Oxford Brookes, and more being awarded 2.2 and 3rd class awards, particularly in the last two years, where the proportion of first class awards has fallen. Most ACP graduates initially take a Foundation degree, which have lower entry requirements than on-campus Bachelor's degrees, followed by a one year Honours level top-up programme – degree classifications are based on the level 6 average only. The ACP colleges provide high levels of academic and pastoral support to enable students to achieve well, and many Foundation degree students are encouraged to progress to the Bachelor's degree route. Most of these top-up programmes require a minimum overall average mark on the linked Foundation degree

programme in order to gain entry, based on evidence that a certain level of attainment will bring a good likelihood of success for students progressing to these programmes.

### *Black and Minority Ethnic students*

*Table 4*

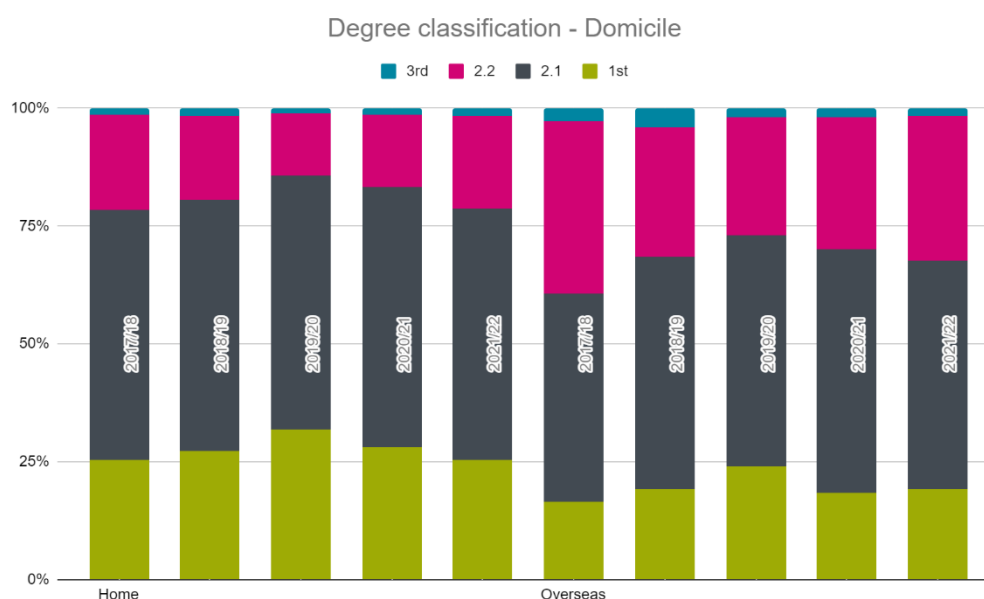


The proportion of first class and 2.1 awards made to BAME ethnic group students is lower than for White students; with degree profiles for these groups showing more 2.2 and third class awards being made. For UK domiciled first degree students, Oxford Brookes showed an attainment gap in 2021/22 of 11 percentage points when comparing White with Black students, and 16% percentage points, when comparing White with Asian students. Action to address differential degree outcomes for BAME students is a strategic priority, and key objectives are set out in the University's Access & Participation Plan. While 2021/22 outcomes are similar to 2017/18 for White students, there is an increase in the proportion of 1st and 2.1 awards between 2017/18 and 2021/22 for Black students (+15pp) and for Asian students (+3pp). The current headline data available suggests a trend in the reduction of Black and Asian students' attainment differential at Oxford Brookes.

### *Part-time students*

Undergraduate programmes are not routinely offered as part-time study routes at Oxford Brookes. However, this study option may be available to students who experience academic or personal difficulties while studying at Oxford Brookes, and are unable to meet the requirements of a full-time programme; but who do not wish to withdraw from their studies altogether and are in a position to retrieve their position so as to qualify for an award. This is a supportive option, enabling students to complete their studies - albeit over an extended period of time - who might otherwise have dropped out of higher education.

Table 5



An unexplained attainment gap between UK and international students has previously been identified, and a working group established in order to gain a greater understanding of the international student experience. The group completed a wide-ranging initial report in 2022 and made recommendations relating to various aspects of the student experience, which were approved by the Vice-Chancellor's Group. These included recommendations to put in place a set of measures to address the gap in degree outcomes; ensure assessment strategies enable international students to demonstrate their learning effectively (for example, guidance on marking work produced in English as a second language, and reviewing assessment loads); and measures to more closely monitor international student progression. These recommendations will be implemented by the International Student Steering Group, with oversight of progress by the Teaching & Learning Enhancement Committee.

### 3 Improving the learning experience and degree outcomes for all

#### *Inclusive teaching*

The University has a strong commitment to developing inclusive learning and teaching environments and improving degree outcomes for all our students. This commitment is formalised in a number of key institutional resources and structures, including:

- The Inclusive Curriculum Enhancement Group, referred to above, is a task and finish sub-group of the University's Access and Participation Group, and is responsible for overseeing and evaluating the curricular and pedagogic workstreams developed to support the objectives of our Access and Participation Plan.
- The IDEAS inclusive curriculum model and design tool has been developed by the University's Centre for Academic Enhancement and Development, and the IDEAS principles underpin all their activities. It is now also embedded within the programme validation process, to support programme teams with developing inclusive, digitally enabled practice, with the aim of making the Oxford Brookes curriculum more relevant to a diverse range of students, and ensuring progression and good outcomes for all students so as to meet the commitments and milestones of our Access and Participation Plan.

## *New academic framework*

A new academic framework for undergraduate programmes replaced the Undergraduate Modular Programme structure from September 2020, for level 4 entrants. A key aim of the new framework was to support transition, progression and attainment for all students. However, due to the changes to delivery and assessment that were necessary during the Covid-19 pandemic, and corresponding amendments to the new progression rules, it is not yet possible to assess the impact of the introduction of the new framework.

The new academic framework involves a change to undergraduate programme structure so that:

- progression is based on a linear model of progress through discrete levels of study from level 4-6, with the removal of reference to Stage I (level 4) and Stage II (levels 5 and 6);
- there is a minimum limit of compulsory modules per study level;
- there is a maximum limit on optional modules;
- a limited amount of credit may be awarded where a pass mark has been marginally missed (between 30-39%), providing that the minimum number of required modules for that level have been passed satisfactorily – the new system of limited compensated passes is designed to prevent students from trailing failed modules into the next level;
- only two takes of a module are permitted, rather than the current maximum of three.

The first students will graduate under the new undergraduate framework in 2022-23.

## **4 Assessment and marking practices**

Assessment is taken seriously at Oxford Brookes, and we have a strong commitment to designing assessment for learning. The University's philosophy and approach to assessment is articulated in the Assessment and Feedback Policy (2020/21) applying to all taught programmes. The new policy was assessed for currency and reach against the QAA Quality Code advice and guidance on Assessment. The policy firmly guides staff to position assessment of, for and as learning into their curricula for all students. An additional piece of work has generated guidance on the development and use of assessment rubrics and new online staff development resources to reflect and build assessment practices have been made available to the university's teaching staff. There has also been a significant reduction in the number of examinations since September 2019, especially in semester 1; however, given the other changes to assessment that were necessary during the pandemic, it is not possible to determine the impact this has had on degree outcomes.

External examiners are highly satisfied with the rigour and care taken in respect of the assessment processes across the disciplines at Oxford Brookes, including marking, moderation, and the operation of examination committees – examiners note that programme teams take marking and moderation seriously, and are 'committed to getting the marks right'. They note that marking standards are applied fairly and consistently: the quality of marking is often described as 'exemplary', and internal moderation is transparent and well documented. According to our external examiners, examination committees are well organised, well attended, sensitively chaired, and conducted with care and consideration for students. The assessment processes for programmes delivered through partnership arrangements are governed by the same requirements as home provision; and the responsibilities of all parties, in respect of teaching and learning, assessment and awards, are clearly set out in the programme documentation and Operations Manuals governing the partnerships.

## **5 Academic governance**

Quality assurance requirements governing the assessment processes, including the operation of examination committees, can be found in the [University Regulations](#) and in the [Quality & Standards Handbook](#)

The Quality & Learning Infrastructure Committee (QLIC) plays a key role in the oversight of academic quality and standards, as a sub-committee of the Academic Board, and its sister



committee - the Teaching & Learning Enhancement Committee (TLEC) – plays a major role in driving forward University-wide enhancement initiatives, such as those referred to above, and in overseeing action plans arising from both internal and national student surveys. The student experience is at the centre of the University's governance structures, and both these committees are chaired by the PVC (Education). The Faculty academic management structures, including Associate Deans (Education & Student Experience), Principal Lecturers (Education & Student Experience) and Programme Leads, provide local leadership for quality assurance and the dissemination of good practice in teaching and learning across the University.

Programme approval and review panels operate on behalf of the Quality & Learning Infrastructure Committee, and provide full written reports on their decisions. It is pleasing to note that external panel members for such events give positive feedback on the conduct of these panels at Oxford Brookes, with one noting recently that *"My overall impression was that this was a rigorous process for promoting excellence in teaching. The Chair's management of the review and the knowledgeable internal panel members were particular strengths. The whole approach at Oxford Brookes appeared incisive, supportive and inclusive."*

## 6 Classification algorithms

Details of the assessment and award requirements for Oxford Brookes undergraduate degrees are set out in the University's [Regulations for Study](#), where details of grading schemes, including the Oxford Brookes Grade Point Average system, can also be found.

The classification algorithm for Bachelor's degrees with Honours in the previous Undergraduate Modular Programme (under which the cohorts in this reporting cycle graduated) is based on the average of marks obtained in the best 14 (out of 16) Stage 2 (i.e. level 5 and level 6) modules: the marks for the best six level 6 modules are always included in this average. Alongside the degree classification, Oxford Brookes also operates a Grade Point Average system, which is calculated on the basis of the average of all modules at levels 4, 5 and 6. For students who take a one-year level 6 programme to 'top-up' a Foundation degree to a Bachelor's degree (e.g. through the Associate College Partnership), the classification is based on the average of their level 6 module marks only.

Under the new academic framework, which – as noted in section 3 above - commenced for level 4 students in September 2020, the classification algorithm is changed to reflect the move from Stage 1 and Stage 2 to discrete levels of study. The calculation will give a 75% weighting to the average mark for level 6 study, and 25% to the average for level 5 study. In deciding on this new approach, we carried out a detailed analysis of the potential impact of changing the classification algorithm. A number of different proposed models were explored, and it was found that the algorithm we subsequently adopted showed the least potential for variation in award classification between a range of different groups (including disability and ethnicity) and grade inflation, while remaining close to our existing approach. The new degree classification will be used for the first time for students graduating in 2022-23. The GPA system will be retained under the new academic framework following a review in 2020-21 to ensure it remained fit for purpose.

Students were previously entitled to re-sit an assessment only if they scored between 30-39% (unless exceptional circumstances applied); however, re-sit regulations have been changed as of September 2019 (for students at all levels), so that students now have one re-sit entitlement for any fail grade.

## 7 Teaching practices and learning resources

As noted throughout this statement, the University has a longstanding and ongoing commitment to teaching excellence, manifested in the wide engagement of academic and professional services staff with the teaching practice programmes delivered by the University's Academic Enhancement & Development Team. These courses are open to all staff including those teaching students on Brookes programmes at our partner colleges. They all enable staff to develop their knowledge and skills in a professional community of peers while achieving recognition for their teaching from Advance HE as Fellows of the Higher Education Academy. Since 2019, any member of staff can additionally join the Brookes Teaching and Learning Community which offers a range of ways for

colleagues to share teaching practice that works and develop their approaches to teaching scholarship through grants for impact-oriented projects, reading groups and seminars.

The [BrookesEDGE award scheme](#) enables students to gain recognition for engaging with a wide range of extra-curricular activities which contribute to their academic and personal development.

## 8 Good practice

Our external examiners identify a considerable amount of good practice in teaching, learning and assessment across the University. A significant number of examiners are particularly impressed with the quality of student work, especially project/dissertations; and note that some students achieve exceptionally high standards. All confirm that relevant sector reference points (e.g. subject benchmark statements) and professional body standards have been met. Our external examiners consider that the Oxford Brookes curriculum across the range of provision is particularly strong in respect of:

- its currency and breadth, with reference to the expertise of teaching staff and research/practice-informed teaching;
- student-centred, and often innovative, approaches to teaching and learning, with a strong focus on graduate employability;
- assessment design, including the range of engaging assessment tasks and projects, enabling students to apply theory to practice and allowing for individual and creative approaches; and the provision of high quality feedback on assessed work.

Programme approval and periodic review panels – which also include external academics - identify similar strengths in respect of teaching, learning and assessment, and they additionally frequently commend our programme teams for demonstrating a deep understanding of the student learning experience, making creative use of the virtual learning environment and other technologies to engage students, and providing high quality academic support in a friendly and positive learning environment.

## 9 Areas for further review/action

- The University will continue to progress the inclusivity initiatives outlined in section 3 to address differential degree outcomes - in line with the priorities set out in our Access & Participation Plan - to evaluate their impact, and disseminate the good practice arising.
- The University remains committed to promoting inclusive practice in teaching, learning and assessment, as noted throughout this statement; in particular through the embedding of the IDEAS principles throughout the University's programme of staff development, and other workstreams being monitored through the Inclusive Curriculum Enhancement Group.
- The International Student Experience Group will implement the recommendations from their 2022 report, as noted in section 2 above, and will continue to monitor the impact of these measures in order to gain a greater understanding of the factors involved in the attainment gap between UK and international students.
- A full analysis of the results of the first cohort graduating under the new Academic Framework will be completed over the early autumn 2023.

### Statement developed by:

Quality & Learning Infrastructure Committee, February-June 2020

### Approved by:

Academic Board, 24 June 2020

Board of Governors, 29 September 2020

### Last updated:

December 2022



## 10 Appendix – underlying data

**Table 1 – Degree classification (5 year trend)**

Year	1st	2.1	2.2	3rd
2017/18	24%	52%	23%	2%
2018/19	26%	53%	19%	2%
2019/20	31%	53%	15%	1%
2020/21	27%	55%	17%	2%
2021/22	24%	53%	21%	2%

**Table 2 - Degree classification (Faculty 3 year trend including associate college partnerships)**

Faculty (incl. ACPs)	year	1st	2.1	2.2	3rd
HLS	2019/20	41%	44%	13%	2%
	2020/21	37%	45%	16%	2%
	2021/22	33%	46%	19%	2%
HSS	2019/20	23%	62%	14%	0%
	2020/21	23%	60%	17%	1%
	2021/22	20%	56%	22%	2%
OBBS	2019/20	27%	54%	17%	2%
	2020/21	21%	58%	20%	1%
	2021/22	19%	54%	25%	1%
TDE	2019/20	32%	52%	16%	1%
	2020/21	29%	56%	14%	1%
	2021/22	25%	54%	20%	1%

**Table 3 - Degree classification (Associate College Partnership split)**

	year	1st	2.1	2.2	3rd
ACPs	2019/20	26%	49%	20%	4%
	2020/21	18%	44%	29%	8%
	2021/22	19%	43%	29%	9%
Brookes only	2019/20	31%	53%	15%	1%
	2020/21	28%	56%	16%	1%
	2021/22	25%	53%	21%	1%

**Table 4 - Degree classification (Ethnicity)**

Ethnicity	year	1st	2.1	2.2	3rd
Black	2017/18	5%	50%	40%	6%
	2018/19	18%	46%	31%	5%
	2019/20	16%	43%	35%	6%
	2020/21	23%	46%	25%	6%
	2021/22	17%	52%	26%	4%
Asian	2017/18	15%	47%	35%	3%
	2018/19	18%	53%	25%	3%
	2019/20	23%	49%	26%	2%
	2020/21	15%	52%	29%	4%
	2021/22	19%	47%	32%	3%
White	2017/18	28%	53%	18%	1%
	2018/19	29%	54%	16%	1%
	2019/20	33%	55%	11%	1%
	2020/21	29%	56%	14%	1%
	2021/22	27%	54%	18%	1%
Mixed, Other, Unknown	2017/18	16%	48%	33%	3%
	2018/19	20%	49%	27%	4%
	2019/20	25%	47%	25%	4%
	2020/21	18%	55%	26%	1%
	2021/22	19%	49%	30%	1%

**Table 5 - Degree classification (Domicile)**

<b>Domicile</b>	<b>year</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>3rd</b>
Home	2017/18	25%	53%	20%	1%
	2018/19	27%	53%	18%	2%
	2019/20	32%	54%	13%	1%
	2020/21	28%	55%	15%	1%
	2021/22	25%	53%	20%	2%
Overseas	2017/18	17%	44%	37%	3%
	2018/19	19%	49%	27%	4%
	2019/20	24%	49%	25%	2%
	2020/21	18%	52%	28%	2%
	2021/22	19%	48%	31%	2%