PRIFYSGOL ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY
1872

UPDATED TABLES FOR 2020/21
Degree Outcome Statement

Institutional degree classification profile

1. AU operates a common set of conventions for the award of all undergraduate degrees. Examination boards are centrally managed and rigorous checks are in place to ensure that the University adheres to its regulations and conventions. Annual reports from external examiners consistently confirm that standards are in line with those elsewhere and the threshold standards in the UK. AU Examination Conventions determine progression between years of study and the algorithm for the calculation of degree classes. Regulations and quality assurance procedures are published online in the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH) https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic-registry/handbook/ .

2. Data

Percentage of Students by Degree Classifications					
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
1	18%	15%	20%	25%	27%
II(1)	49%	55%	51%	57%	50%
II(2)	29%	27%	25%	18%	21%
III	3%	2%	2%	1%	3%
AEGROTAT	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
PASS	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%

The two years of COVID influenced results show an increase in first class degrees but less indication of growth in the upper second-class degree proportion. The results for the next academic year will provide a stronger indication of the awarding profile outside of a pandemic. It should also be noted that the results of the National Student Satisfaction Survey again emphasised the high standards of teaching and assessment/feedback provided by academic staff. This must also contribute to the continued high standard shown in these data.

Percentage of Degree Classifications by Subject						
		2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
STEM	1	21%	18%	24%	27%	31%
	II(1)	46%	50%	49%	52%	45%
	II(2)	29%	28%	23%	20%	21%
	III	4%	3%	2%	1%	4%
	AEGROTAT	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	PASS	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%
AHSSBL	1	16%	12%	17%	23%	21%
	II(1)	52%	60%	54%	61%	57%
	II(2)	29%	26%	26%	16%	20%
	III	2%	1%	1%	0%	2%
	AEGROTAT	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	PASS	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%

These proportions reflect the national picture of higher awards being more prevalent in STEM subjects. https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/outcomes/breakdown# However, there are also significant increases that can be attributed to COVID and the no-detriment policy in place at that time.

Percentage of Degree Classifications by Gender						
		2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Female	1	20%	16%	23%	27%	28%
	II(1)	52%	60%	54%	58%	51%
	II(2)	25%	23%	22%	15%	19%
	III	2%	1%	1%	0%	2%
	AEGROTAT	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	PASS	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Male	1	16%	13%	18%	22%	25%
	II(1)	47%	51%	49%	55%	48%
	II(2)	33%	30%	28%	21%	23%
	III	4%	3%	3%	1%	4%
	AEGROTAT	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	PASS	0%	1%	4%	0%	0%

As in previous years, female students achieve higher outputs than male students. While the magnitude does change, the differential stays between 3 and 5%. This is in line with national results published by HESA https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/outcomes. It should be noted that the statistics are complicated by the differential in numbers of male and female students opting to take STEM subjects.

Percentage of Degree Classifications by Parental Education						
		2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Parents have a HE Qualification	1	20%	16%	22%	27%	29%
	II(1)	51%	56%	55%	55%	52%
	II(2)	26%	25%	20%	16%	17%
	III	3%	3%	1%	1%	1%
	AEGROTAT	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	PASS	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%
Parents do not have a HE Qualification	1	18%	11%	22%	28%	26%
	II(1)	51%	60%	51%	57%	50%
	II(2)	28%	26%	24%	15%	21%
	III	3%	2%	1%	1%	4%
	AEGROTAT	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	PASS	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%
Don't know / Unknown/ Refused	1	17%	16%	18%	21%	28%
	II(1)	45%	51%	48%	58%	46%
	II(2)	34%	30%	29%	20%	23%
	III	4%	2%	2%	1%	3%
	AEGROTAT	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	PASS	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%

It is difficult to confirm a definite trend over time, however, students with parents holding an HE qualification do have slightly higher grades in the most recent two years. There is a slight difference in the data if a 5-year average is calculated but this remains small and probably not significant.

Percentage of Degree Classifications by Entry Age						
		2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Below 21	1	16%	11%	19%	27%	32%
	II(1)	57%	61%	59%	58%	54%
	II(2)	25%	25%	22%	15%	14%
	III	2%	2%	1%	0%	0%
	AEGROTAT	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	PASS	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
21 and above	1	20%	17%	22%	23%	24%
	II(1)	42%	51%	45%	56%	47%
	II(2)	33%	28%	27%	20%	25%
	III	4%	2%	2%	1%	5%
	AEGROTAT	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	PASS	0%	1%	4%	0%	0%

Taking a 5-year average shows that mature entrants achieve a higher rate of first-class degrees; counter-intuitively, they also achieve a lower rate of good honours. This may well be a reflection of the variable backgrounds and academic entry standards exhibited by mature entrants. The national picture, also seen at AU, of a higher withdrawal rate for mature students makes it difficult to draw conclusions from this data. This is due to students who withdrew during their course being excluded from the qualification data.

Recent years suggest that the pandemic favoured the under-21 age group students far more than mature students. This may be down to the changes in learning technology or with younger students being more familiar with online learning.

Note in relation to AU's provision with partners, because numbers are so small these cannot put in a table as individuals could be identified.

Assessment and marking practices

3. Assurance of assessment and marking practices is provided through engagement with external examiners and assessors, from the development of programmes through to delivery, assessment and annual monitoring. Cyclical review processes, take a longer term perspective of student performance and achievement at subject level. Annually around 70 subject level undergraduate academic external examiners are managed through a central team, and overseen by Academic Board. The final Senate degree awarding board, involves external scrutiny of AU's processes by a senior administrator from another UK university.

4. External examiners are key to the assurance process. Appointees are academics experienced in assessment, curriculum design, and enhancement of the student experience. Criteria for appointment and their role are set out in the AQH and an online briefing is provided for all new externals. A summary and overview of external examiner reports is provided annually to Senate. Aberystwyth staff also act as external examiners and panel members at other institutions, engage with staff development including as Advance HE fellows all of which contribute to a wider awareness of external reference points and subject benchmarking.

5. The AQH sets out the processes and provides guidance for assessment, marking and moderation procedures, treatment of special circumstances and appeals. Independent internal observers attend departmental exam boards as well as subject external examiners and departments undertake an analysis of results as part of the exam board process. All work, including examinations, is marked against criteria outlined to students at the beginning of a module. Annual reports on the level and types of academic appeals indicate that these are made on the grounds of special circumstances and provide further reassurance that marking and moderation processes are effective. Special circumstances are managed in each Faculty, with recommendations reviewed centrally and difficult cases referred to a central Senate special circumstances panel.

Academic governance

6. Faculty Academic Affairs Committees report up to Academic Board and onto Senate, which is responsible for academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement of all provision. Partnership arrangements are overseen by the Collaborative Provision Board, which also reports to Senate. The Senate Examination Board is the degree awarding board to which all departmental boards report. Academic Board and Senate are given the opportunity to contribute to and comment on this Degree Outcomes Statement and the annual QA statement provides the governing body with oversight of QA, including partnership activities.

Classification algorithms

7. The honours classification system is determined according to a common set of conventions. The 'cascade' is a weighted average of all modules taken in part two contributing to the final degree. It allows students to retrieve earlier poor performance; focusing on and rewarding good performance while not giving undue penalties for failure; it can cope with different possible combinations of levels and modules of different credit weightings, giving a lower weighting for lower level modules. The algorithm has not changed since its inception in the 1990s apart from the weighting given to year abroad studies. Students are normally assessed immediately following completion of teaching and allowed two resit opportunities for a capped mark (40% for FHEQ level 4, 5 and 6 and 50% for level 7), reassessment is not allowed for any passed modules.

Teaching practices and learning resources

8. The University continues to invest in improvements in learning resources and to support innovation in teaching practices and a dedicated Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit supports academic staff. Widespread practices include mandatory lecture capture for all lectures; electronic submission of coursework with online marking and feedback; principles of effective feedback including guidelines for exam feedback; an attendance policy combined with attendance monitoring; the use of learning analytics and engagement dashboard by personal tutors and also proactive interventions with low-engaging students; required minimum presence (RMP) on the VLE; mandatory reading lists for all modules, refurbishment of teaching rooms and creation of social learning spaces; Peer Support for Teaching and sharing of effective teaching practice through annual L&T conference, Exemplary Course Award (ECA) and CPD programme; and University-wide Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs).

Identifying good practice, and actions

9. The operation of a single university wide degree algorithm is one of good practice and centrally managed processes help to deliver consistent application of rules across all academic departments. In the interests of further improving consistency, work will continue to review procedures to see where more operational activities could be automated.

Risks and challenges

10. While we are confident that no notable risks have been identified, we will maintain a close watch on the number of firsts and the data for the next couple of years will help to provide a clearer indication of the awarding profile outside of a pandemic. The annual quality assurance statement to the Governing Body is the mechanism by which quality assurance processes a reported, drawing attention to activity in the previous year. A traffic light system provides an indication of the level of concern against the key issues identified in the executive summary in the report.