Degree Outcomes Statement - July 2020

1. Institutional degree classification profile

As a large globally connected Russell Group institution, the University of Liverpool is committed to providing a consistently high-quality academic environment, enabling our students to succeed academically and personally as well-rounded, enquiring global citizens prepared for life beyond graduation. Through carefully designed programmes of study and rich extra-curricular opportunities students develop as knowledgeable, adaptable and skilled contributors to the local and global society. At the heart of our curricula is a focus on intellectual enquiry, rigour and challenge.

Over the past five years, on average 78% of students at the University of Liverpool have achieved good honours awards (Class I and II:I). This overall position and the distribution across classes have remained largely stable over that period, despite a significant increase in the overall qualifying student body (44.5%) from 2014-15 to 2018-19. The breakdown across classes is summarised as follows:

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class I</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Two Division One</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>50.2%</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Two Division Two</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Three</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree Non-Honours</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Detailed analysis of the overall institutional position in relation to particular student cohorts has been undertaken and reviewed. These include, but are not limited to, analysis by ethnicity, age, sex, socioeconomic measures (including POLAR) and students with any registered disability. The following headlines are noted:

- Students with a disability achieve a high percentage of Class I and II:1 degrees with an average of 81.9% over the last five years, compared to 77.9% of students without a disability. However, Class I degrees contributed a lower proportion when compared to students without a disability. For context, disabled students make up 7.4% of the student awarding classified degrees across the previous five years.
- A difference in the level of attainment between genders is evident over the last five years with a lower percentage of male students achieving Class I and II:1 degrees. Female student attainment has generally increased but saw a decline in 2018/19.
- The upper POLAR groups outperform the lower POLAR groups by achieving a higher proportion of Class I and II:1 degrees. There is a consistent and significant gap between the highest and lowest groups, with a 13.6% gap on average.
- The combination of a higher proportion of students coming from the upper POLAR groups, and the higher success rate in achieving a Class I and II:1 degree, means that a third of all awards of these degrees are to students from the POLAR 5 group.
There is a disparity in the percentage of Class I and II:1 degrees being awarded to BAME students, with attainment gaps varying between 16.1% and 18.8% across the last five years. There are apparent attainment gaps between young (<21) and mature (>21) students and further analysis reveals that students over the age of 26 have lowest rates of Class I and II:1 although this cohort is too small to draw robust conclusions from.

Identified sustained attainment gaps are being addressed through both internal planning processes and via targeted work linked to our Access and Participation Plan.

Institutional data are interrogated at a more granular level at subject level in relation to the key student groups. A Faculty level breakdown of main features is provided in an overview report. The university has introduced a new learner data dashboard and scorecard at discipline level which prompts programme and department teams to analyse their student cohorts by main characteristics (such as domicile, ethnicity, age, and gender) The dashboard also enables detailed consideration of combinations of characteristics and features such as entry qualifications, partner entry route, and specific disability type.

Action planning at subject level based on these data then addresses priorities in relation to the performance of our student groups. Through the process described in section 6, annual subject-level action planning is undertaken as part of our regular quality assurance activity, with Faculty and institutional oversight through Academic Quality and Standards Committee and Senate.

Please note, the summary table and headlines noted above exclude non-classified degrees in Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science, MBChB, BDS, BVSc). However, all areas of the university consider and report on the performance of their students with respect to continuation and achievement through the standard quality assurance process.

2. Assessment and marking practices
The university assures itself that assessment criteria meet sector reference points through the key processes outlined below.

The University has an agreed process for programme approval which is published as part of the wider Framework for Quality and Standards. Consideration of external reference points is part of this process, e.g. Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

During the design phase of programme approval, programme teams work with colleagues from the Centre for Innovation in Education (CIE) who support the development of the curriculum using the principles of the Liverpool Curriculum framework (C2021) which includes the hallmark of Authentic Assessment. The curriculum design process is underpinned by a constructive alignment approach.
The University has a published code of practice on assessment and a number of associated appendices. The Code and appendices are reviewed and updated as necessary to ensure appropriateness and alignment and due consideration of any internal and external requirements.

- **Appendix A** - University Marks Scale, Marking Descriptors and Qualification Descriptor
- **Appendix F** - Assessment Appeals Procedure for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes
- **Appendix H** - External Examiner System for Taught Provision
- **Appendix K** - Policy on Adjustments and Assessment to Examination Arrangements for Disabled Students including Annex 1: Guidelines for marking and feedback for students with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs).
- **Appendix M** - Policy on Extenuating Circumstances in Relation to Performance in Assessments and Examinations.

The University has a published framework for quality and standards. Assurance that quality management processes are effective is built into oversight at all levels within the University. Oversight of standards in relation to assessment is maintained at local level by Module Review Boards and Boards of Examiners, Faculty oversight is at Faculty Quality Committees and institutional oversight is undertaken by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee. In addition, quality and standards at programme level are overseen via subject reporting, which is received at Faculty and University level. The delegation of activities to various levels within the University ensures that activities remain effective.

The Module Review Board has oversight of any changes to marking practices and any impact this might have on grade profiles with external examiner approval. Boards of Examiners are also made aware of any module level changes to marking practices in order to be able to consider the overall impact on student grades.

Finally, the university’s process of Internal Periodic Review provides opportunities for additional assurance in this area and highlights any departmental changes to marking practices and associated impacts on grades.

**3. Academic Governance**

The University has both a robust governance structure and effective quality assurance processes in place to ensure that the value of qualifications awarded over time is protected. Senate is the University’s senior academic committee and has responsibility for the University’s awards, the quality and standards of the academic programmes and approving any changes to the regulatory Code of Practice on Assessment.

Academic Quality and Standards Committee has delegated authority from Senate to approve operational matters in relation to quality and standards matters. Ongoing oversight and evaluation of
assessment procedures is maintained by the Assessment and Feedback Working Group. This group regularly (five meetings per year) reviews policies and procedures to ensure they remain fit for purpose and that sector wide best practice is used to inform any changes and developments.

The University has a fair, accessible and timely appeals process for handling academic appeals. The OIA Annual Statements routinely confirm that we have a below median number of cases subsequently found justified or partially justified by the OIA so we retain confidence in the appropriateness of our appeal procedures and decision-making.

Externality in the preparation of the Degree Outcomes Statement has been incorporated by the use of a report from the University’s External Examiner.

4. Classification Algorithms
The University's classification algorithms are contained within the documents below.

System for the Classification of Three-Year Non-Clinical Undergraduate Degrees
Classification of Four-Year and Five-Year Non-Clinical Undergraduate Degrees

The University has a single algorithm for all 3 year undergraduate non clinical programmes and a single algorithm for all 4 year undergraduate non clinical programmes that include a year in industry or a year abroad. Profiling (automatic uplift) is detailed in the documents above. Information regarding resits is also within these documents. A recent mapping exercise against the QAA Quality Code, Assessment Advice and Guidance Section, indicated that the University’s approach to reassessment is in line with sector norms and expectations.

The philosophy and rationale for the algorithms is contained in the following document: Code of Practice on Assessment. All regulatory information is published on the Academic Quality and Standards Division web site with full public access. All students are provided with a University Handbook. This provides a summary of the requirements for achieving a degree.

Other stakeholders (e.g. academic and professional services staff involved in marking or servicing Boards of Examiners) are made aware of the relevant regulations through staff inductions, general training and annual updates. External Examiners receive the relevant information via appointment documentation and induction activity. Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies also have access as relevant and are consulted appropriately during any review activity.

The University does not plan on any immediate change to its algorithm, but regularly reviews appropriate evidence to ensure they remain fit for purpose. There have been no changes to the algorithm since 2010.
5. Teaching practices and learning resources

The University of Liverpool has established a dedicated unit to promote and enable teaching excellence through the strategic development of the staff at the University. The Academy provides opportunities for colleagues to develop their teaching practice at all stages of their academic career.

The Academy has a fully accredited Advance HE, UKPSF scheme (ULTRA) which has seen the University increase its fellowship numbers over the past few years, with an increase from 21% in 2014-15 to 51% in 2018-19. The Academy work closely with the Centre for Innovation in Education (CIE) in supporting staff to develop teaching practice and support curriculum design aligned to our curriculum framework.

The Academy has also been at the forefront of external involvement with AdvanceHE regarding the training of external examiners. Following participation in the pilot in 2017, three iterations of the Advance HE Professional Development Course (PDC) for External Examiners have been delivered at the University of Liverpool by the Academy, with 73 members of staff having completed the training so far. Participants who complete the PDC go on to an Advance HE register which qualifies them to be External Examiners for other universities.

Developments in the curriculum have been underpinned by significant investment in the digital infrastructure and estate, including state-of-the-art teaching and learning spaces, such as new music practice rooms, architecture studios, language laboratories and specialist PC hubs. All these improvements were triggered by student feedback on their learning spaces. As an example of impact, Architecture's result in the NSS question on access to specialist equipment, facilities or rooms has improved from 64% in 2014 to 82% in 2017. The Central Teaching Laboratory, established in 2012, was the UK's first shared teaching laboratory for physical, environmental and archaeological sciences, designed to enhance student experience through high-quality, contemporary learning facilities and promote inter-disciplinary learning. It has been internationally acclaimed for its innovation in UG science education. A CTL-based team of academics won the HEA's Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence in 2016, recognising their role in promoting student success. The CTL was judged to have had an impact on departments across the University, supporting new pedagogies improving employability skills, and introducing cross-disciplinary modules and multi-disciplinary dissertation projects.

In addition to investing in the physical estate the University has continued to invest in digital infrastructure and resources to support learning and teaching, such as an in-house lecture capture system and e-portfolio systems. To support the effectiveness and efficiency of assessment and feedback, we have implemented electronic management of assessment (EMA) across all courses. The impact of this has been shown in improvements to the NSS scores for Assessment and Feedback increased, which between 2010 and 2016 increased by 13% to 72%, with 17% gains for Feedback on my work has been timely and The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance, and a 14% gain for I have received helpful comments on my work.
Students are supported at all stages of their journey with the University of Liverpool and we continue to invest in this, such as increased mental health support as well as a sector-leading careers and employability service which puts students at the heart of this support model with the Career Studio.

Our library provision show consistently high student satisfaction and we continue to invest, with £4m spent in 2017 to create new study spaces, social spaces, and flexible technology-rich individual and collaborative learning zones. The library hosts the university’s central academic support unit, KnowHow, which offers a range of face to face and on-line opportunities including student workshops and one-to-one writing development tutorials, and a suite of on-line interactive resources developed in-house for Liverpool students.

Since the launch of KnowHow activity on-line in 2017, engagement with KnowHow has dramatically increased across the student body. Access to the KnowHow on-line module via the university’s VLE ensures that students can engage whenever they need with academic support on topics as diverse as academic integrity, dissertation preparation, groupwork, presentation skills and preparing for examinations. During the last academic year, 2018-19, a total of 2172 student attendees were registered on KnowHow workshops, with a higher proportion than the general population identifying as BAME (58%). In that same year, 8480 students accessed the KnowHow on-line module, spending a total of 2824 hours engaging with the materials. KnowHow’s forward looking development plan sets ambitious targets for levels of student engagement, with a specific target (80%) set for engagement with on-line provision by students in target groups.

6. Identifying good practice and actions

Our approach to monitoring programme data and progress against targets has been significantly enhanced by the availability of datasets and scorecards for subject-level analysis and action planning. Oversight of our performance with respect to continuation, year averages and overall degree attainment and related subject-level action planning is maintained through our Academic Quality and Standards Committee and Education Committee. Developments in access to data in a manipulable form has enabled more detailed interrogation of gaps in relation to the overall student body, by discipline and by student characteristic group, evaluation of the impact of actions and dissemination of effective practice.

Actions in response to performance over the period of this statement include the development of transition support for mature learners and those with non-standard entry qualifications, targeted incourse skills development activity, peer-based academic and social learning initiatives and the developments in the inclusive curriculum. An example of action to address transition is our work to align curricula with partner institutions. With respect to one local college, continuation among articulating students has increased to 91%, closing a gap relative to the cohort as a whole. A specialist transition programme of support put in place for the BTEC students in year 1, covering additional study skills, exam preparation and workshops on underpinning subject theory resulted in bringing down the first-year attainment gap compared to A level students to 5%. The pilot has now
been rolled out to other subjects with students with BTECs and NTQs and an attainment gap. In support of our under-represented groups, including mature students, those with disabilities, and with mental health issues, we have introduced a number of initiatives to support continuation and attainment, including funding for assistive technologies and transcribing services for disabled students, running KnowHow workshops to support the use of these technologies, and promoting positive approaches to mental health such as through our well-attended Wellbeing Week activities.

Over the last three years curriculum development under the banner of Curriculum 2021 has delivered considerable change in the student learning experience, in particular through the focus on active learning, digital fluency and authentic assessment. This has led to the diversification of task types and outputs, a rebalancing of formative and summative assessment and broadening of student digital skills. Assessment redesign has been supported by the TESTA methodology (testa.ac.uk) particularly in Humanities and Social Sciences programmes, where significant enhancements have been made to the clarity and student understanding of rubrics, assessment formats and improvements to feedback. Innovations in assessment design include the introduction in Life Sciences of a two-stage testing model to address issues with respect to automatically marked on-line tests. This involved introducing a formative stage giving feedback for incorrect answers, before a summative part accessed only once a threshold standard in the first part had been achieved. The new model has led to increased attainment at all ability levels, with the mean exam mark up from 58% to 65%. Dentistry has developed an award-winning initiative called LIFTUPP, a competence-based learning-tracking/management system used by academic and clinical staff to provide individualised and timely feedback to students and report on their learning. As a result of the introduction of LIFTUPP there was a demonstrable increase in student satisfaction with assessment and feedback from 50% to 89% between 2009 and 2016. LIFTUPP is now commercially available and is being used at other universities across the UK.

The Degree Outcomes Statement will be reviewed and refreshed annually by Education Committee, Senate and Council.

7. Risks and challenges

Regular review of our data, action planning and progress through our committees at university, Faculty and subject level provides relevant opportunities to review our risks and challenges.