

Solent University Degree Outcomes Statement

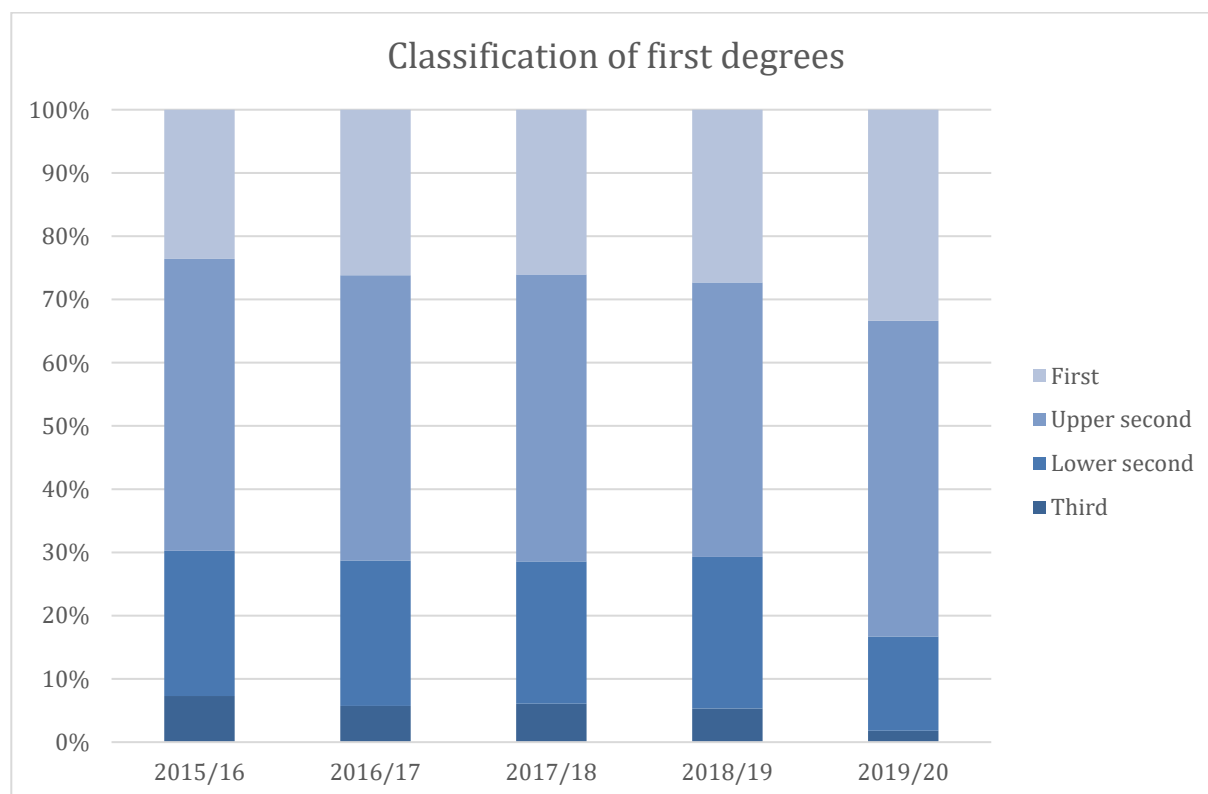
This statement provides information on the ways in which the University ensures that its degrees meet national expectations for degree standards. It includes links to key documents which provide further information. This document has been considered by the Academic Board and approved by the Board of Governors, both of which include student representation.

Institutional degree classification profile

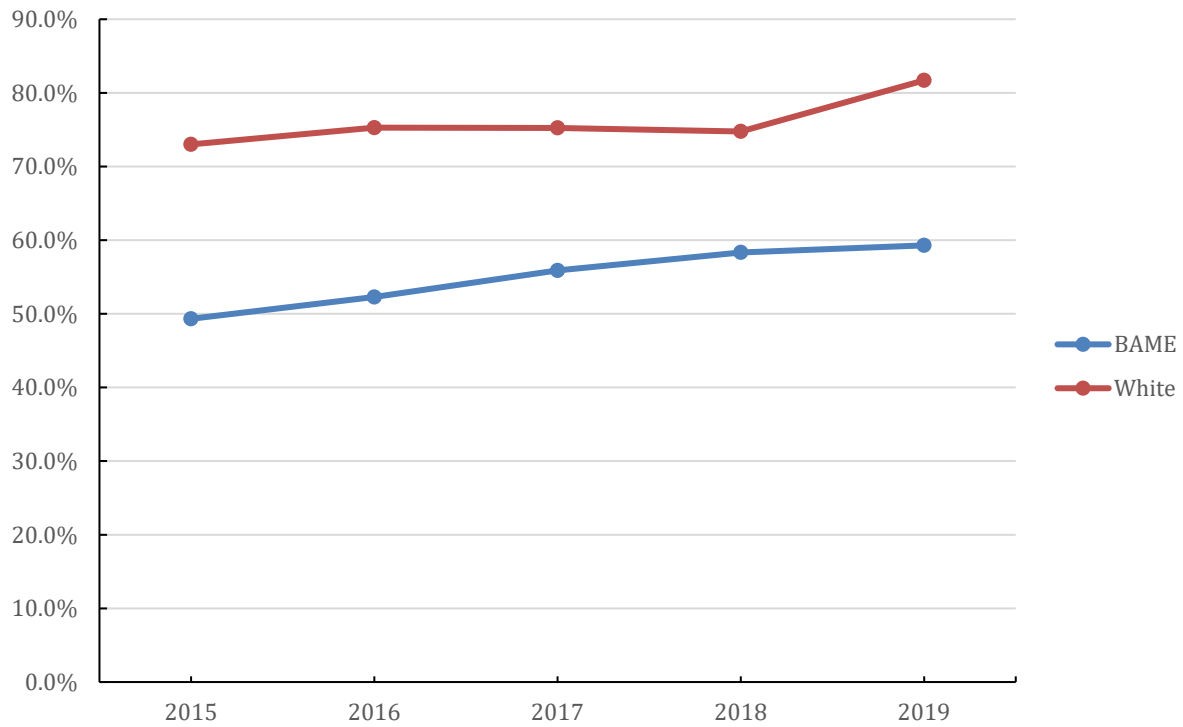
The data includes all undergraduates, full- and part-time. It includes students studying at partner institutions in the UK and excludes all students studying wholly overseas.

The proportion of good degrees has increased for the last three years to 83% in 2019/20, with the number of first class awards increasing by 6.1% points and the number of upper second class awards by 6.5%.

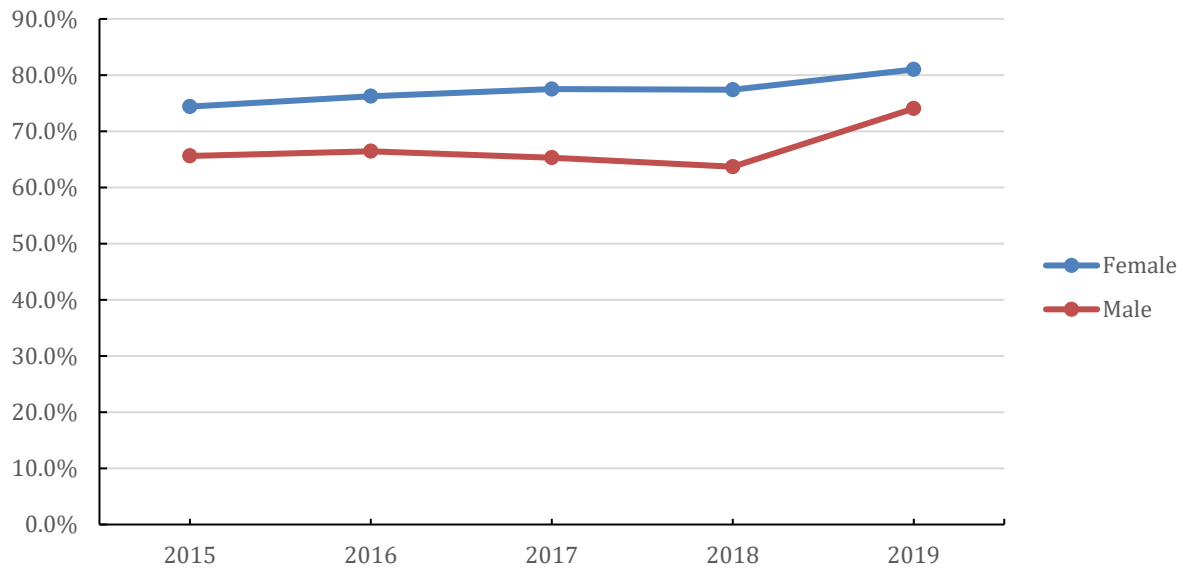
There has been an increase in the proportion of first class and upper second class degrees awarded over the last five years. This follows the introduction of a number of key initiatives, such as the work of the Student Achievement Team supporting students whose academic profile indicates that they are performing at a level very close to the borderline between different degree classifications (further information on this and other enhancements to academic support and provision are given below). In addition, the University has a range of quality assurance mechanisms in place to ensure that such increases reflect student achievement within a context of appropriate academic standards. These are outlined below.



Percentage of Students Achieving Good Honours by Ethnicity



Percentage of Students Achieving Good Honours by Gender



During the 2019-20 academic year, the University introduced No Detriment principles to mitigate the disadvantage to students studying during the global pandemic. The principles followed guidance from both the Quality Assurance Agency and the Office for Students. Analysis shows that this had an impact on the degree classifications of 194 (6.4%) students.

Assessment and marking practices

The University has comprehensive and effective policies and procedures to assure the quality and standards of its awards which are set out in its [Academic Handbook](#).

All Solent University courses are designed in accordance with the Solent University [Real World Curriculum Framework](#) to ensure national standards published through subject benchmarks and relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, are met. Courses are only approved after thorough scrutiny by a validation panel which always includes external experts alongside experienced University staff. The panel examines the proposed courses to ensure that all aspects of the course including assessment strategies, module and course learning outcomes are fulfilled to an appropriate standard.

University processes ensure that all assessment tasks are designed to provide the opportunity for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and to discriminate between achievement levels. Draft assignment briefs and examinations always undergo an internal scrutiny process. These are also reviewed and confirmed by subject expert external examiners for those assessments which take place at award-level. Any revisions proposed through these steps are considered and implemented before assessment tasks are given to students.

The marking of students' work is undertaken by academic staff working to the assessment and marking standards outlined for each piece of assessed work. These are aligned, through the University's generic grading criteria to national standards. A sample of marked work from each assessment task is internally moderated to ensure consistency and appropriateness of feedback provided to students and the grades awarded. Subject expert module external examiners also review a sample of student work from all award-level assessment activities to ensure University standards are aligned to national expectations.

The University operates a grade marking approach to assessing students, firstly identifying the classification band in which the student's work falls, and then categorising this as high, medium or low within this band. This work has provided greater reliability to the assessment processes over the last 10 years, has been thoroughly reviewed and is seen to offer a clear, consistent and fair way to evaluate the student's performance. Where an assessment has clear right or wrong answers or there are specific requirements by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body, percentage marks are used.

Academic governance

The University's governance structure allows for rigorous strategic and operational oversight of the quality of delivery and the standards by which the University assesses its provision. The University has an Academic Handbook which includes procedures for monitoring and reporting on quality and standards through its committee structure, culminating in an annual report to the Board of Governors.

The Board of Governors delegates authority to Academic Board. Academic Board is responsible for general issues relating to the research, scholarship, teaching and courses at the University. Within its remit, Academic Board has responsibility for:

- policies and procedures for assessment and examination of the academic performance of students;
- the content of the curriculum;
- academic standards; and
- the validation and review of courses.

Academic Board has established committees to discharge its responsibilities. The Learning, Teaching and Student Achievement Committee has responsibility for advising Academic Board on the effectiveness of the University's arrangements for:

- securing the quality of the student learning experience;
- safeguarding academic standards; and
- developing and monitoring the Learning, Teaching and Student Achievement Supporting Strategy.

The Committee's deliberations are supported with appropriate data reflecting internal and external requirements.

Classification algorithms

The Solent University Degree Algorithm is set out in the University [Assessment Regulations](#), which were reviewed and revised taking into account sector guidance and practice in 2017. As noted above, temporary adjustments were made in the 2019-20 academic year to support students during the Covid 19 pandemic.

The regulations have been designed to balance the full range of factors that contribute to the final outcome of a student from penalties for late submission and consideration of extenuating circumstances to the weighting of marks across levels and the classification boundaries. This ensures that the outcomes for students are fair, appropriate and aligned to national standards and expectations.

The University applies standard bands to classifications in line with those of the UK Higher Education sector. For the award of Bachelors degrees with honours, a student is required to pass all 360 credits of their award. The University places an emphasis on the exit velocity of students taking 70% of a student's final award from their final year outcomes and 30% from those primarily based at level 5. This allows Solent students, many of whom are the first in their family to enter Higher Education, the time and space at level 4 to explore the expectations of a University education and the opportunity to make and recover from mistakes on their journey, without this having a significant impact on their final award. The award therefore reflects the standard of student achievement.

The algorithm takes the best 100 credits at level 6 to calculate 70% of the student's final award grade and the next best 100 credits from the level 5 and lowest graded level 6 modules to calculate the remaining 30% of the student's final award. However the University does not operate a borderline for consideration of awarding a higher classification, and simply takes a two decimal place outcome, and awards the higher classification if the weighted outcome is at *9.5% or above.

Teaching practices and learning resources

Solent University is committed to continually enhancing the quality of our teaching and our curriculum. The Solent Learning and Teaching Institute (SLTI) supports the University in its goal of providing an excellent student learning experience, by helping develop the delivery of innovative, inclusive, and stimulating teaching. As a result, our graduates maximise their educational potential and head out into their careers with confidence. In partnership with students and the academic community, the whole SLTI team support our teaching staff to design activities or produce engaging material for students learning flexibly as well as for those on campus, to ensure that every student, on any course, can access excellent teaching and learning opportunities.

Teaching practice

Our activities are designed to support colleagues in continuously improving their learning and teaching practice. SLTI offers a range of programmes and services to help academics develop. These include resources for new teaching staff, a PG Cert in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, routes to Advance HE Fellowship, ongoing CPD, peer practice exchange, and Solent module evaluation.

Learning technologies

At Solent, a team of learning technologists provides innovative approaches to help find the most effective way to do things. Whether it is exploring how to get more out of the virtual learning environment, Solent Online Learning (SOL); advising students; or working on blended learning, the learning technologies team helps our academic staff teach and our students learn.

Instructional design

The instructional design team is responsible for driving the progression of blended learning at Solent, with the goal of bringing to life the University's commitment to a stimulating, enriching and excellent teaching and learning experience, both in the classroom and online. Its work is based on the principles of accessibility, inclusivity, connectedness, intentional learning and constructive collaboration laid out in the SOL Standard. The team also has a focus on academic literacies and how these can be integrated into the curriculum, with SOL an active and essential component of every student's learning journey. The team works closely with academic colleagues to explore options for doing more with SOL, whether that is redesigning an assessment, a module, or a wholly online course.

Student Achievement Team

The Student Achievement team focuses on overall level 6 (L6) achievement as one of its projects (this includes top-up students). The team aims to positively impact the achievement and good honours rates for each academic year via a series of initiatives:

1-1 Achievement Health Checks (AHC)

Achievement Health Checks are one-to-one (1:1) meetings between a L6/top-up student and a member of the team. Students can contact the team directly to arrange a meeting. These take place between October and March and provide the student with a chance to discuss the University assessment regulations, how the degree award is calculated and to review their previously achieved results. The meeting also involves supporting the student with goal setting, future career plans and sharing good practice and tips from successful alumni.

Academic Year	Total AHC Meetings Attended	Total Number of Good Honours Achieved (of those that attended)
18/19	172	131 (76.2%)
19/20	382	328 (85.9%)

Class visits

The team offers in-class visits for L6/top-up taught sessions. In this short presentation they offer general university assessment regulation information and how the degree award is calculated for standard students on that course. They also share good practice and tips for getting the most out of the final year. This reaches a wider audience and provides an opportunity to promote 1:1 AHC's to students.

Academic Year	Total Number of Class Visits Attended
18/19	32
19/20	62

19/20 ‘No Detriment’ advice and guidance

The team supported students with queries about the No Detriment (ND) principles and was able to provide tailored advice regarding their individual academic positions.

Total Number of L6 Students Supported through ND	Total Number of Good Honours Achieved
361	311 (86.1%)

Students on the ‘cusp’

The team accesses data that identifies the level 5 results for students whose academic performance profile is on the ‘cusp’ of an award banding. (The cusp of a banding is considered as 2% either side i.e. a level average of 58%-62% is on the cusp of 2:1 for that level). In 2018/19 there were 784 students on the cusp of a 1st to 3rd. 66.3% (520 students) achieved a good honours award. In 2019/20 there were 737 students on the cusp of a 1st to 3rd. 76.9% (567 students) achieved a good honours award.

Identifying good practice

Feedback from final year students through the National Student Survey 2020, showed that in all survey areas Solent scores exceeded or matched sector averages. A number of survey areas reflecting the student academic experience including learning opportunities (+2%); assessment and feedback (+3%); academic support (+5%) learning resources (+2%) and learning community (+5%) were several percentage points above the sector average.

	Solent 2020	Yearly change	Sector 2020	Sector yearly change	Difference between Solent and sector
Teaching (TEF)	84%	0%	84%	0%	0%
Learning opportunities	85%	0%	83%	0%	2%
Assessment and feedback (TEF)	76%	0%	73%	0%	3%
Academic support (TEF)	84%	0%	79%	-1%	5%
Organisation and management	75%	0%	74%	-1%	1%
Learning resources (Subject TEF)	88%	1%	86%	0%	2%
Learning community	81%	1%	76%	0%	5%
Student voice (Subject TEF)	80%	3%	74%	0%	6%
Overall satisfaction	83%	1%	83%	-1%	0%

Many External Examiners commented on significant improvements in student performance during the 2019/2020 academic year:

“The standards are always estimably high. If anything, the work I saw was even more proficient this year”;

“This was a particularly strong cohort with a high number of exceptional students which seemed to have had a positive effect on the performance and overall standard of the rest of the cohort.”

“There has been an incremental betterment in student performance.”

“There is obvious evidence of student performance improvement in 2019/2020 especially if compared to the previous three academic years.”

Solent University was awarded Silver in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF), reflecting its high-quality teaching, learning and outcomes for its students, which constantly exceed the rigorous national quality requirements for UK higher education. In particular, the reviewing panel praised Solent’s excellent practice and performance, including:

- Levels of contact time, including personalised provision, resulting in high levels of engagement and commitment to learning and study from students.
- The learning opportunities available which have been designed to encourage student engagement and meet the needs of individual learners.
- The embedded approach to developing and recognising excellent teaching practice.
- The substantial investment in learning resources to promote student learning.
- The way the University integrates research and professional practice into the curriculum.
- How Solent actively promotes student employment opportunities, and the University’s commitment to building student employment; especially through professional mentoring and business start-up support.

Risk and challenges

The University is confident in its course design, teaching and learning approaches and assessment regimes and monitoring. However, it is never complacent and is fully aware of its responsibility to provide outcomes to students that hold their value over time. To this end, the University’s Academic Board and its committees, along with senior managers of the University analyse the data at University, faculty and course level regularly. Along with an annual review of the outcomes of students being considered by protected characteristic by the Academic Board, the University has developed a course dashboard which uses a traffic light system to prioritise the work of the University. It has been recognised that students from BAME backgrounds have an attainment gap when compared with their white colleagues and closing this gap through enhancing the achievement of BAME students is a key focus for the University. As part of course-level annual review, action plans are produced and monitored to enhance all underperforming aspects of a course from academic outcomes, progression rates, employability and the student experience.

The University has been delighted by the improvements in the student experience achieved over recent years, with overall outcomes in all areas of the NSS 2020 being equal or better than those of the sector average.

Actions

The University is committed to:

- adding value to every student throughout their time studying at the University
- focus its portfolio on developing the real world education that provides students with the knowledge, understanding and skills to ensure they have an impact in the world of work after graduating.
- close the BAME attainment gap;
- review the University degree algorithm and wider assessment regulations in line with recent guidance from the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assurance;
- monitor closely the University outcomes for good honours and continue to support the enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment strategies to support grade improvement, whilst guarding against grade inflation.