

Degree Outcomes Statement

Academic Year 2023/24



BATH SPA
UNIVERSITY

1. Institutional Degree Classification Profile

In 2023/24, 23.8% of degrees awarded by Bath Spa University were classified with First Class Honours (figure 1). This represents a marginal increase over the figure of 22.6% for 2022/23, but a lower figure than the previous two years 2020/21 and 2021/22. These factors also impacted the Good Honours rate – the percentage of awards given First Class or Upper Second-Class honours (figure 2). In 2023/24, the Good Honours rate decreased to 65.9%, down from 72.6% in 2022/23 and a high of 83.1% in 2021/22.

The reduction in the number of good honours degrees over the last two years can be explained partly with reference to:

- the end of the “no-detriment” policy put in place in the years most affected by the pandemic, and the return to standard degree classification calculations.
- the growth in the number of graduates at franchised partnership institutions included in this data; including for top-up awards which are subject to a different classification algorithm due to the nature of the direct entry into the final year of study

Figure 1. BSU Undergraduate degree classification distributions by year, 2018/9 to 2022/3

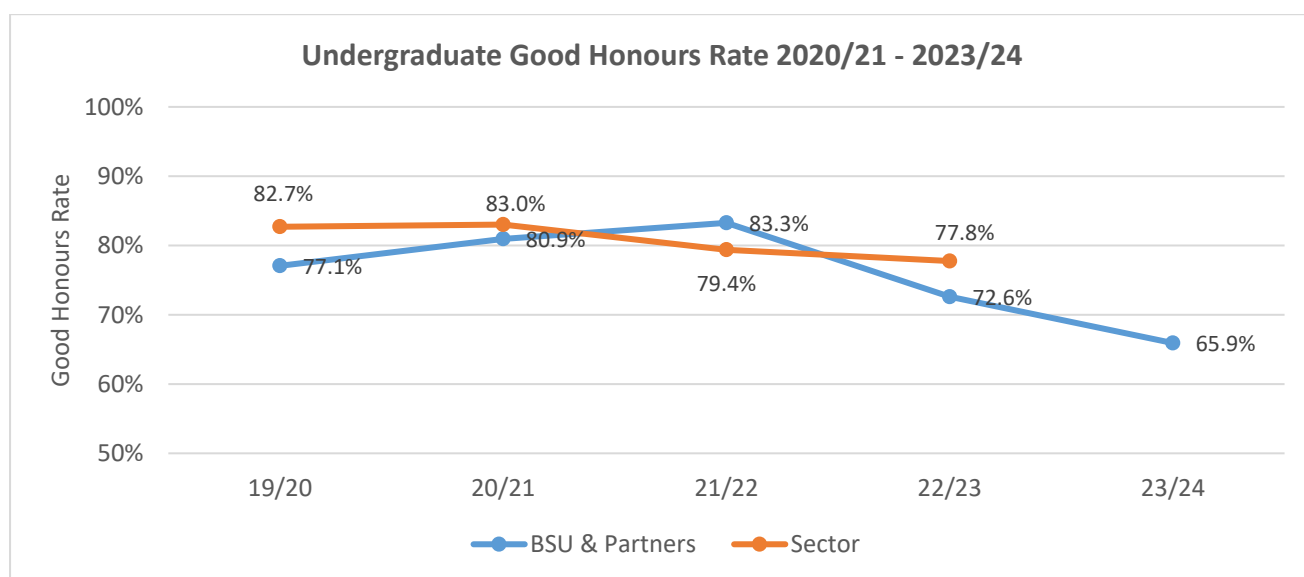
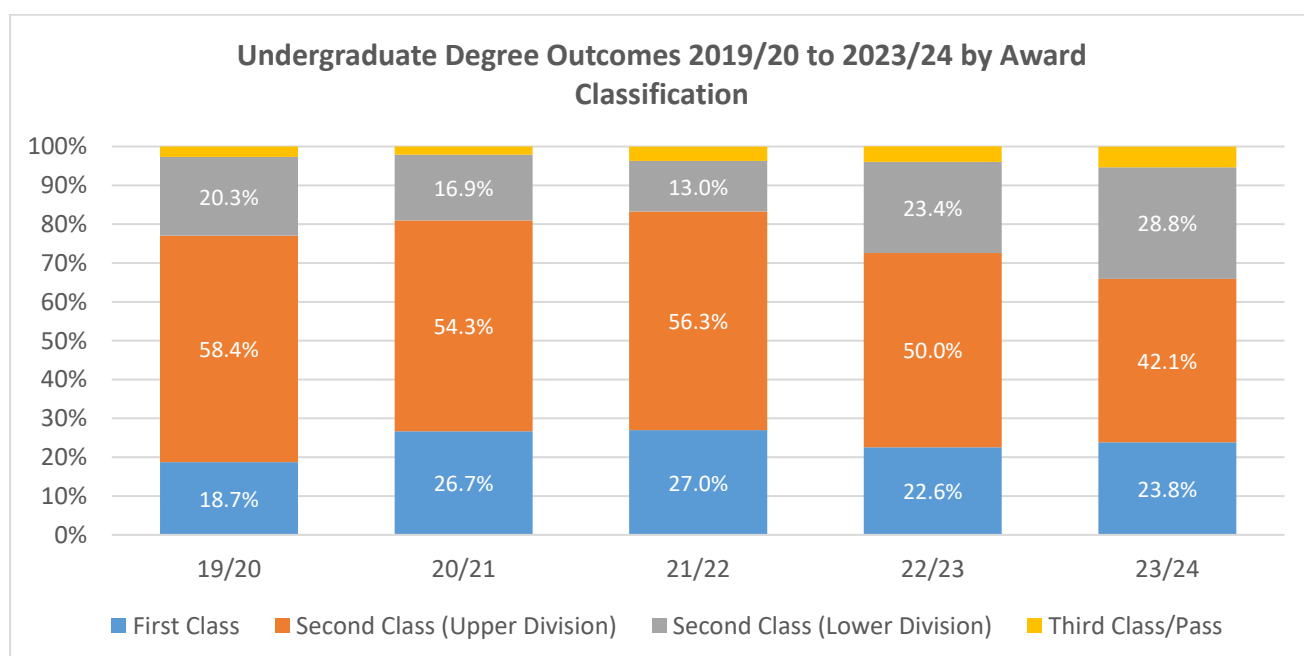


Figure 2. Undergraduate Good Honours rate, BSU versus UK sector average, 2019/20 to 2023/24

	Degrees Awarded by Class					Proportion of Degrees Awarded				
Class	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
First Class	310	444	472	417	474	18.7%	26.7%	27.0%	22.6%	23.8%
Second Class (Upper Division)	967	903	986	924	837	58.4%	54.3%	56.3%	50.0%	42.1%
Second Class (Lower Division)	336	282	228	433	572	20.3%	16.9%	13.0%	23.4%	28.8%
Third Class/Pass	44	35	65	73	106	2.7%	2.1%	3.7%	4.0%	5.3%
Number of Graduates	1657	1664	1751	1847	1989					

Table 1. BSU Undergraduate degrees awarded by classification, 2019/20 to 2023/24

We actively monitor our trends in degree outcomes, including at course level and across student demographic groups on an annual basis, and this is reported into Education Committee. The Central Assessment Board also considers trends in degree outcomes to ensure oversight from Chief External Examiners.

The University operated a no-detriment policy for the calculation of classifications in academic years 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22, to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. The University's (previously unimplemented) standard classification algorithm was operated for the first time in 22/23. This saw a decline in the number of good honours rates that year.

We are committed as an institution to enabling all students from all backgrounds to achieve their full potential, and therefore have university-level actions set out to address any attainment differentials based on various student characteristics.

2. Assessment and Marking Practices

The FHEQ and Subject Benchmark statements are utilised as key reference points during the [Programme Design and Approval](#) phase, where the programme and its constituent modules are developed, along with assessments to measure attainment of intended learning outcomes. Programme design is an iterative co-creation process which draws on expertise including internal members of staff, external academic members, students, employers, and professional bodies.

Internal moderation of marking is applied to both home and partner provision, and all summative assessments are moderated on a sample basis. When the University is establishing new programmes with collaborative partners, it is normal for 100% of marking to be moderated in the initial phases before reverting to the standard requirements outlined in the [Assessment and Feedback Policy](#). Requirements for double and second marking are set within our Assessment and Feedback Policy.

We operate two levels of external examining for both home and partner provision: Chief External Examiners who attend final awards boards and comment on the overall framework, regulations and student outcomes; and subject external examiners who comment at module level. We have established criteria for appointment of external examiners, to ensure they can provide a knowledgeable and impartial view of the University's programmes.

On an annual basis, external examiners confirm that we are maintaining threshold academic standards in accordance with the Sector-recognised standards and Subject Benchmark statements, and that the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended learning outcomes. Responses are provided to External Examiners on an annual basis, and actions reconfirmed the following year. The Education Committee receives an overview of subject and institutional level themes and risks arising from external examiner reports.

We have an [Assessment and Feedback Policy](#) which provides details of the expectations around assessments, marking, moderation and the use of external examiners to ensure the consistency and fairness of marking.

We have an [Appeals Policy and Procedure](#), which details the process and steps students can take to appeal decisions which would impact on their progression, assessment and degree outcomes.

We have an [Exceptional Circumstances Policy](#), which defines how students may apply for special consideration if they are unable to complete an assessment due to circumstances beyond their control.

The University approve a Marking Criteria and Grading Descriptors toolkit, which is being piloted in 2024/25. This will enable a more standardised approach for grading and giving feedback to students on individual assessed work, further strengthening the ability to justify how marks have been arrived at and enabling students to focus effort to improve performance in particular areas.

We have a robust process for the regular review of our policies and procedures and reporting on appeals, exceptional circumstances and academic misconduct are considered on an annual basis by the Academic Board. Updated policies are published in an [Annual Policy Bulletin](#).

3. Academic Governance

The Academic Board is responsible for the academic leadership of research, scholarship, teaching and courses at the University, as defined by the Academic Board and sub-committee terms of reference. The Academic Board provides an Annual Report on Quality and Standards to the Board of Governors to confirm the University's approach to the management of academic standards and the quality of the student experience.

The value of qualifications awarded over time for home and partner provision is protected by processes which also ensure marking practices are followed. These are overseen by Academic Board and its sub-committees and include:

- Subject Boards which determine marks for individual modules, and Central Assessment Boards which makes judgements about student's performance as a whole, as defined in our [Academic Regulations](#), and the [Undergraduate Academic Framework](#).
- External examining system, as referenced above.
- Education Committee, a sub-committee of Academic Board, maintains annual oversight of degree outcomes and learning and teaching developments and is responsible for planning, implementing and reviewing the effectiveness of interventions to ensure all students, regardless of background, are enabled to succeed in their studies.
- [Programme Review](#), which is a two tiered process underpinned by a set of core KPI metrics, to drive improvement in course areas via an Active Monitoring Plan or Local Enhancement Reflection.
- The growth of student numbers being taught through the University's educational partnerships has been matched by developments in governance structures to maintain oversight and enhancement of provision delivered through those partnerships. The University has established a Partnership Delivery Group, which oversees the operational and delivery requirements and operational management of the University's educational partnerships, and reviews key performance indicators for the partnerships, reporting to the Partnership Strategy Group. Partnership Strategy Group is responsible for maintaining senior leadership oversight of the University's partnerships and making strategic decisions around the direction of the University's educational partnerships overall.
- Link tutors are appointed for partner provision, who monitor and report on the academic quality of the partner provision, both in terms of the learning and teaching, and the attainments of students on those programmes. Processes to enable institutional oversight of our collaborative provision are outlined in the [Partnership Management](#) procedures.

4. Classification Algorithms

The Bath Spa algorithm for the determination of final award classification is outlined in section 5 of the [Undergraduate Academic Framework](#) along with a [Guide for Students on the Undergraduate Framework](#), which explains the practical application for students.

The current Bath Spa University algorithm used to calculate the classification of awards was established following a review in 2016/17 to align the classification algorithm weighting across programmes and years, credits included in the final algorithm, progression rules and rounding. This algorithm is applicable to all undergraduate students. The algorithm excludes the weakest 20 credits at level 5 and 6 to enable creative risk taking and for students to be able to take credits outside of their subject in line with our university strategy. The algorithm weights the classifiable credits for level 5 at 30% and level 6 at 70%. This weighting split reflects the nature of the portfolio at Bath Spa, with many of the University's programmes requiring projects, dissertations, performances or artefacts in the final year of study. The algorithm is rules based, with no discretion, borderlines or rounding at the final award level.

A no-detriment policy was implemented in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a temporary amendment to the algorithm. The weakest 40 credits at Level 5 and 6 were excluded from the calculation of degree classification for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 graduates.

For students registering on 'top up' awards (entering directly into the final year of study); their classifications are 100% weighted on the best 100 credits from 120 credits completed and passed at Level 6.

The Bath Spa resit limits are outlined in the [Academic Regulations](#). Students who fail at the first attempt have an opportunity to retrieve their work for a capped pass mark. A further fail requires a re-take with attendance for uncapped marks. Our resit limits are broadly in line with our comparator institutions and feedback from our external examiners.

The University regularly reviews the ongoing suitability of the standard classification algorithm, its alignment with UK expectations for degree algorithm design, and classification data operating on previous and current algorithms.

5. Teaching Practices and Learning Resources

The University's Education Committee oversees the implementation of the Education Strategy, which outlines several initiatives to enhance learning and teaching. The University also approved a new [Access and Participation plan](#) in September 2024, which includes targeted intervention strands related to the enhancement of learning and teaching and the provision of student support for courses delivered in Bath and at partner providers.

The Education Committee also oversees the provision of digital and physical learning resources to students and uses student feedback to inform the enhancement of the student experience. It receives reports on the outcomes of and actions being taken in response to the annual National Student Survey and oversaw the launch of module evaluation surveys in 2023/24. The Committee also receives regular reports about the work of the Learning Innovation and Skills unit, which drives forward several of the initiatives in the Education Strategy to develop teaching quality, support good curriculum and assessment design, and provide guidance to academic staff on marking and feedback. The University also has published a [Learning and Teaching Delivery Statement](#), outlining its institutional approach to learning and teaching, including contact hours, student workload, online learning, resources, and student engagement.

The University continues to work closely with our educational partner providers to develop learning and teaching approaches aligned with the needs of their student demographic to ensure that we support all students to achieve a good outcome.