MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT
2018/2019

1. INSTITUTIONAL DEGREE CLASSIFICATION PROFILE

The proportion of students awarded good honours degrees (defined as either First Class Honours or Upper Second Class Honours) increased from 70.4% in 2014/15 to 72.8% in 2018/19. There were modest increases every year, except in 2015/16, when the proportion fell slightly to 68.9%.

Degree outcomes vary between faculties, with Health, Psychology and Social Care seeing the highest proportion of good honours degrees in 2018/19 (76.5%) and Business Law at 69.3% in 2018/19. The proportion of students attaining a good honours degree varies across different ethnicity groups at Manchester Met. In 2018/19, 53.6% of black students achieved a good honours degree, compared with 60.3% of Asian students, 78.2% of white students and 68.4% of other/mixed ethnicity. The entry qualifications of students also affect degree outcomes, with 80.4% of students entering with academic qualifications (e.g. A Levels) achieving good honour degrees in 2018/19, compared with 58.5% of students with vocational (e.g. BTEC) qualifications.

Manchester Metropolitan has a proud track-record in Access and Widening Participation. It has a diverse undergraduate student profile and recruits and supports high numbers of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. In line with requirements from the Office for Students (OfS), the University has produced an Access and Participation Plan (APP) that focuses on actions to address differential student outcomes through an integrated and holistic approach to student support and success. A key aim set out in the APP is to achieve progressive and planned reductions in gaps in good degree outcomes based on ethnicity and social disadvantage, so that they are eliminated completely by 2030/31.

The University is committed to ensuring students with a disability, students from estranged backgrounds and students who are care leavers are supported to the best of its ability during their time at the University. The University targets and supports students through its First Generation scheme, which supports students who are the first in their family to enter higher education.

The University’s Education Strategy supports the activities and themes set out in the Access and Participation Plan, for example through the Third Term initiative and the Academic Skills Unit (see section 5 for more detail on these areas).

The Office for Students’ access and participation data dashboard helps to compare different student groups and their peers across all stages of a student’s involvement at English universities and colleges, including Manchester Metropolitan, across a five-year period.

2. ASSESSMENT AND MARKING PRACTICES

The University employs sector recognised practices to ensure our qualifications are robust and in line with national and international standards, and are compliant with the QAA Quality Code. The Regulations for the Academic Awards of the University provide the definitive
reference point for all awards offered by Manchester Met, their credit profile and academic level under the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). Under this sits the University’s new Curriculum and Assessment Framework, which was introduced in January 2019. The Framework outlines the detailed requirements regarding credit volume, structure and assessments for all academic programmes. Alignment with the relevant Framework is rigorously scrutinised at programme approval / re-approval to ensure that programmes meet the required standard and conform to structural expectations.

The University’s Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate, Taught Postgraduate and Postgraduate Research programmes contain definitive requirements for achievement of academic and practice credits, progression between the levels of study, calculation of degree classifications and conferment of awards.

In 2018/19, the University had links with 60 PSRBs. Checks are carried out on annual basis to ensure the Assessment Regulations meet the PSRB guidance and frameworks. In instances where a variation or exemption from the regulations may be required in order to meet PSRB criteria, a Request for Variation to / Exemption from the University Assessment Regulations must be submitted and approved by the Faculty Head of Education, Head of Assessment and Engagement Management and the Education Committee.

The University currently employs c.210 External Examiners for programmes delivered within and by the University, with all taught programmes having oversight by at least one independent examiner. Examiners monitor and review all academic provision (apart from level 3 Foundation year) and work closely with academic teams to support the processes for verifying the standard of assessments, and moderating student work to ensure marks are applied consistently and at the appropriate level. External Examiners ensure institutional and subject level maintenance of threshold academic standards, in accordance with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and Subject Benchmark Statements.

The University’s Verification and Marking Moderation Procedure ensures there is a standardised approach to both internal and external moderation and the role of External Examiners.

Throughout 2018/19, the University has continued to play an active role in the AdvanceHE/OfS Degree Standards Project on External Examining. Through participation in this scheme, over 150 Manchester Met staff have undertaken the accredited training programme designed to support them in obtaining roles as External Examiners within the sector. The University has specified criteria for the appointment of External Examiners which are detailed in the External Examining Policy.

3. ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

The University’s Academic Board retains ultimate oversight and accountability for all aspects of the University’s regulatory framework, as well as policies and procedures for assessment and examination of the academic performance of students and procedures for the award of qualifications. Academic Board is chaired by the University’s Vice-Chancellor. Membership includes the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Chief Operating Officer, Pro-Vice Chancellors, Faculty representatives and Students’ Union representatives.
The Education Committee has delegated responsibility for the oversight of all taught provision, including responsibility for the maintenance of academic quality and standards. Adherence to the University’s Assessment Regulations is assured through Assessment Boards, convened on behalf of the Academic Board, and comprising senior academic staff and designated External Examiners. Under the Procedures for the Conduct of Assessment Boards, Assessment Boards are attended by a Chief External Examiner, who is responsible for confirming their satisfaction with the standards and conduct of the Board, and with the integrity and equity of the University’s processes for conferring awards.

The Education Annual Review (EAR) process, which has been in place since 2017, assesses Departmental and Programme-level performance against institutional objectives, and ensures appropriate levels of accountability for the Education Strategy KPIs. Education Annual Review meetings take place for each Department, chaired by the PVC Education and with scrutiny informed by a dataset and qualitative information. Actions are targeted around local enhancements to the student experience and progress towards achievement of the KPIs and tracked through Faculty and University committee structures. From 2019/20, EAR meetings will have authority to require programmes to submit for full re-approval.

One of the core sources that informs the EAR process is External Examiner feedback. Through provision of an annual report, External Examiners affirm the ongoing maintenance of academic standards, comment on student performance and highlight any areas for enhancement. An annual overview of Examiner feedback is provided to the Education Committee.

4. CLASSIFICATION ALGORITHMS

The University’s Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate, Taught Postgraduate and Postgraduate Research programmes detail the University’s classification algorithm. Any proposed changes to the Regulations are scrutinised in detail by a working group of senior academic and professional services staff and elected Students’ Union officers, before ratified proposals are taken forward for approval through the committee structure. Changes are only implemented where there is demonstrable evidence that there will be no adverse impact upon the student experience, and that standards will continue to be maintained.

The classification algorithm referenced in the Assessment Regulations is applied across the Institution. There is no opportunity to exercise discretion when determining degree awards outside of what is detailed in the Assessment Regulations. The University has not made any significant changes to the classification algorithm over the time period of the dataset provided as part of this Statement. Whilst the University applies the same classification algorithm to the overwhelming majority of its partnership arrangements, due to professional accreditation reasons a minority of partnership arrangements use an amended algorithm.

5. TEACHING PRACTICES AND LEARNING RESOURCES

The University has initiated a Student-Centred Curriculum Programme that is focused on changing the way Manchester Met structures and delivers its undergraduate programmes. The project seeks to make the University’s curriculum more flexible and inclusive by
introducing a range of activities that currently take place outside curriculum frameworks. The Third Term offer gives students the opportunity to tailor their studies and get involved in a wide-range of experiences to learn new skills, earn credits towards their degree and shape their future career. Students have access to a variety of options that could improve their marks and performance, including but not limited to, studying or volunteering in another country, gaining work experience or learning a new language. In many activities the University has made financial support available to cover placement and mobility costs. The pilot of the Third Term offer was launched during 2018/19 to a positive reception.

During 2018/19, the University completed a review of the support for learning and teaching, which resulted in the creation of the University Teaching Academy (UTA) in April 2019. The focus of UTA is to provide teams who teach and support learning with opportunities to develop their educational practice, promote innovative teaching and assessment approaches. UTA informs institutional thinking about the organisation of education, providing academic staff with a range of resources, activities and support in relation to enabling career development, enhancing performance, facilitating leadership and supporting curriculum development.

Students have access to a range of support services during their time at the University, including:

- Counselling, Health & Wellbeing, which provides individual counselling and mental health support;
- Student Hubs, which provide a first point of contact for all student matters, including finance, timetables and careers advice, and refer to specialist support if required;
- Academic and Study Skills, which supports students by running self-selecting provision such as one-to-one appointments, workshops and drop-ins, as well as offering bespoke input into units;
- Disability Service, which works with students to provide advice and information about the support that is available to them.

The University continues to make a considerable investment in transforming its estate to ensure that it is fit for purpose, enhances the student experience and supports the highest quality research and training.

Academic year 2018/19 was a period of considerable change, with several new initiatives and improvements. The University will continue to review the impact and efficiency of these changes through its usual governance routes to ensure their impact on degree outcomes is evaluated.

6. IDENTIFYING GOOD PRACTICE AND ACTIONS

Institutional wide assessment regulations have been in place for many years, along with associated policies and procedures. The University has robust mechanisms in place to ensure its regulations, policies and procedures are rigorously reviewed. Assessment regulations are managed through core University systems.
The Education Annual Review (EAR) process, referenced in section 3, is an effective method of identifying improvements for assessment and marking that has direct input from the Students Union. Actions from the EARs are followed up with focused professional development opportunities that are always aimed at improving assessment literacy and decision-making.

As described in section 3, External Examiners play a key role in verifying the standard of assessments and sharing best practice from across the sector. Staff engagement with the AdvanceHE/OfS Degree Standards Project on External Examining has had a positive impact on the assessment literacy of the University’s staff and has improved practices.

7. RISKS AND CHALLENGES

The University strategically assesses its taught portfolio according to metrics and performance as part of its drive to improve quality, consistency and the student experience. In addition to this, the University continually strives to improve how it supports its students both in their academic work and wider student life. It is a reasonable assumption that these activities will impact the University’s degree outcomes and may well result in an increased number of top-class degrees awards.

The University is committed to developing its understanding of what factors can affect student performance, (e.g. socio-economic, entry qualifications, ethnicity) to address differential student degree attainment and graduate outcomes. The University’s Access and Participation Plan and Education Strategy are focused on building on the University’s strong foundations in these areas and making further improvements.

The University is reviewing ways it can help and support more students to progress to their next academic year of study, in particular for Level 4 students progressing to Level 5. This support covers both academic and pastoral support services.

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