BANGOR UNIVERSITY DEGREE OUTCOME STATEMENT 18/19

The following document contains an analysis and overview of the trends in degree classification profiles between 2014/15 and 2018/19. In addition, the document contains a description of the University's algorithm for calculating undergraduate degrees and an overview of the practice within the institution to ensure oversight of the assessment and examining process.

1. INSTITUTIONAL DEGREE CLASSIFICATION PROFILE

The profile of undergraduate degree outcomes at Bangor University over a five-year period up to the academic year 2018/19 is given in Table 1. The proportion of 1st and 2:1 degrees combined (hereafter referred to as good degrees) has increased year on year over the period, whilst there has been a concurrent reduction in the proportion of 2:2 and 3rd Class or Pass degrees.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
First class honours	19.9%	21.6%	25.3%	28.3%	28.9%
Upper second class honours	42.2%	44.8%	43.9%	42.7%	42.2%
Lower second class honours	30.2%	26.1%	24.0%	23.1%	23.3%
Third class honours/Pass	7.4%	7.1%	6.6%	5.3%	4.4%
Unclassified	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%	0.6%	1.2%
% 1st / 2:1	62.1%	66.5%	69.2%	70.9%	71.1%

Table 1. Undergraduate degree outcomes profile for Bangor University 2014-2019

Table 2 provides the same degree outcomes profile by gender for the same time period, with the trend in the proportion of good degrees for females and males plotted in Figure 1.The proportion of good degrees for both females and males have increased in year on year, with the increase being most apparent for both genders in the proportion of 1st Class degrees awarded. The proportion of 2:1 degrees awarded over the 5-year period has been much more stable for both females and males.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
First class honours	20.8%	23.1%	27.9%	31.1%	31.0%
Upper second class honours	42.5%	46.2%	43.9%	42.9%	43.3%
Lower second class honours	29.6%	23.8%	22.6%	20.6%	20.8%
Third class honours/Pass	6.7%	6.7%	5.5%	5.2%	4.1%
Unclassified	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.8%
% 1st / 2:1	63.4%	69.3%	71.8%	73.9%	74.3%
	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male
First class honours	18.6%	19.8%	21.7%	24.2%	26.0%
Upper second class honours	41.6%	43.0%	43.9%	42.4%	40.8%
Lower second class honours	31.1%	29.1%	25.9%	26.8%	26.4%
Third class honours/Pass	8.4%	7.4%	8.0%	5.4%	4.9%
Unclassified	0.2%	0.7%	0.4%	1.2%	1.8%
% 1st / 2:1	60.2%	62.8%	65.6%	66.6%	66.8%

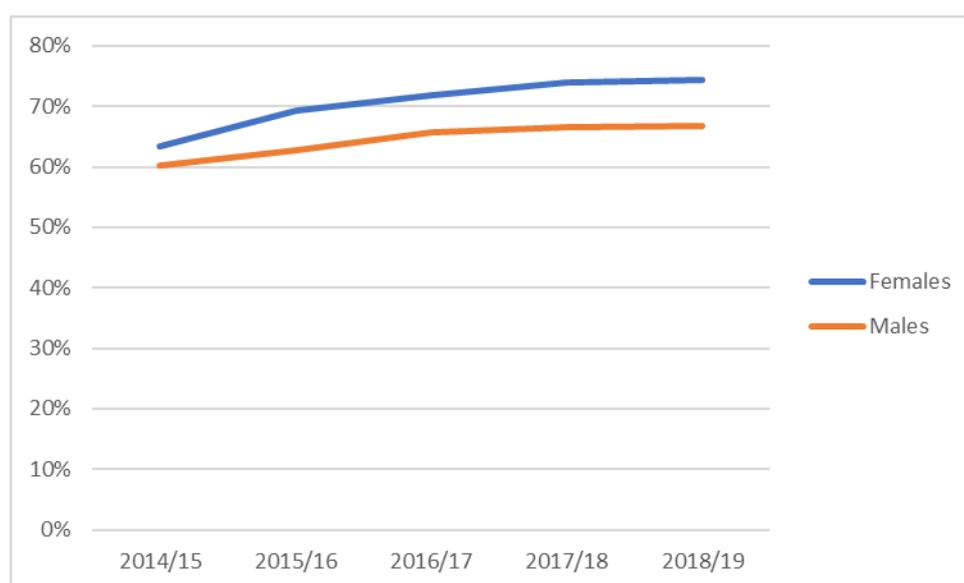Table 2. Undergraduate degree outcomes profile for Bangor University 2014-2019 by gender.

Figure 1. Trend in the proportion of good degrees by gender, 2014-2019.

The average proportion of different degree classifications by JACS subject area over the five -year period is given in Figure 2. There is some variation in degree classification between subject areas, with the proportion of 1st Class degrees ranging from 15.7% (Education) to 37% (Engineering & Technology). Similarly, the proportion of 2:1 degrees ranges from 24.8% (Engineering & Technology) to 50.5% (Creative Arts & Design). Over the five-year period the proportion of good degrees ranges from 58.5% (Subjects Allied to Medicine) to 80.1% (Creative Arts & Design). This equates to a range of 21.6% in the proportion of good degrees awarded across the subject areas at Bangor University. The average proportion of 2:2 and 3rd degrees is highest in Education and Subjects Allied to Medicine, respectively. The range across all subjects for the proportion of 2:2 and 3rd Class degrees awarded is 18% and 13.1%, respectively.
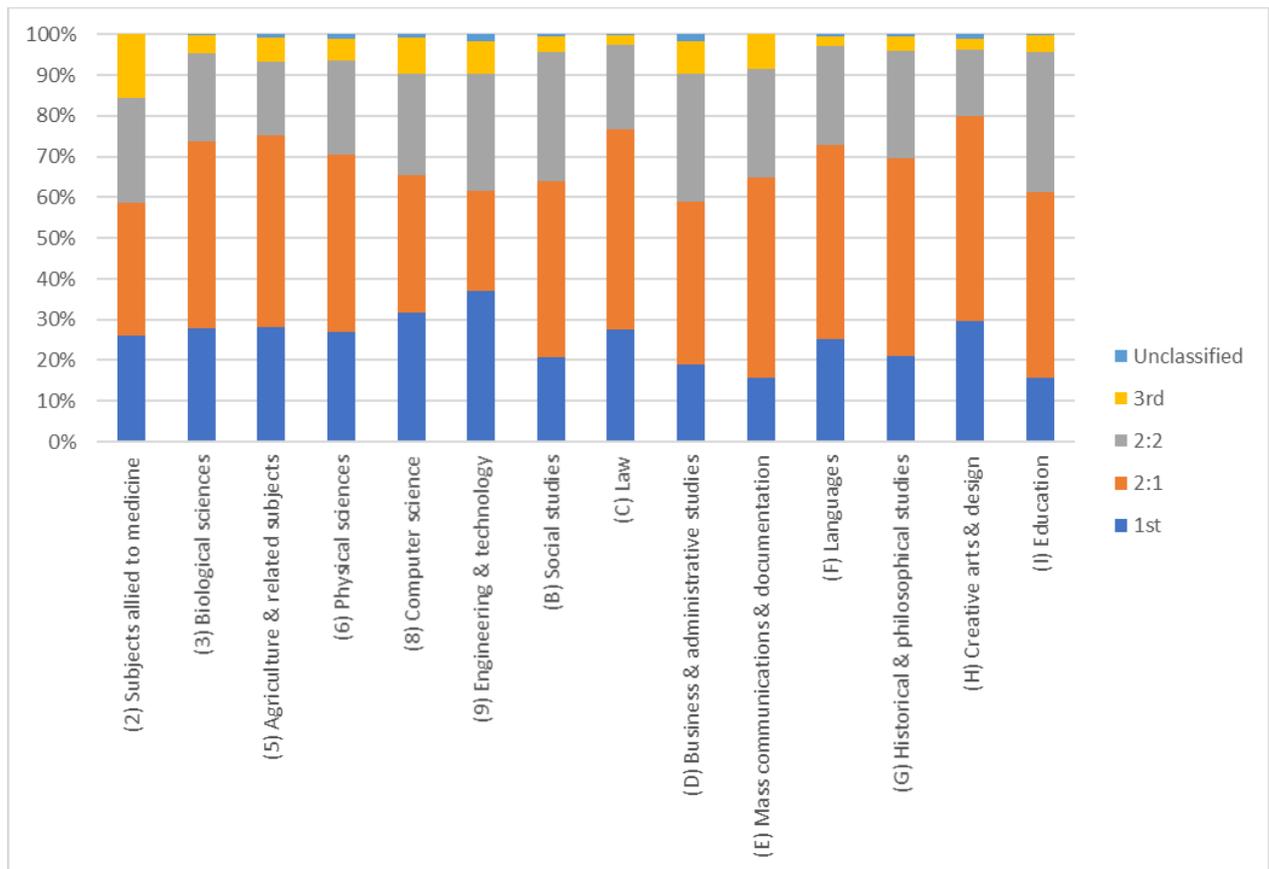

Figure 2. Five-year average degree classification by JACS subject area.

2. ASSESSMENT AND MARKING

The University has in place a set of principles that governs its approach to assessment. These are set out in an *Assessment Framework,* produced in 2018, which was commended in the University's QAA Enhancement Review Report (2018). The principles are wide-ranging, encompassing for example assessment design and detailed guidance on assessment weighting and equivalence.

The *Assessment Framework* is available to staff and students and is intended to ensure that staff and students share common expectations of assessment. The *Assessment Framework* outlines the

expectation that assessment must incrementally reflect the level of study and deliver an appropriate degree of academic challenge to students. Those designing assessments are required to ensure that assessment genuinely measures students' attainment of the relevant learning outcomes and provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate that attainment to the highest level possible.

All assessments must be mapped to at least one module learning outcome. These are linked to programme learning outcomes and reflect subject benchmark statements where available and PSRB requirements where relevant. Programme and module learning outcomes are grouped according to the criteria set out in the QAA's degree outcome classification descriptors including professional competencies where relevant. The linkages of module learning outcomes to programme learning outcomes and subject benchmark statements are made explicit on the programme specification, which is maintained centrally by the Quality Enhancement Unit. Assessment approach and mapping to learning outcomes are considered during module validation.

Marking, verification and Examination Boards

As set out in the University's Regulations for Taught Programmes, an External Examiner must approve all questions used in examinations that count towards an award, in order to assess the appropriateness, relevance and level of questions according to their knowledge of sector norms.

Students use marking criteria to understand what they are expected to achieve. The University uses subject-specific marking criteria that reflect the disciplinary and professional context of a programme. Module and assessment specific marking criteria are also made available to all students.

The University's Regulations for Taught Programmes set out the process for the verification of marks and the purpose of this. Marks for all modules across the University are verified each time they are taught. Each School has procedures to deal with major differences between markers and verifiers and a statement of the verification processes used is agreed by the Board of studies and is considered when a School is Audited by the Quality Enhancement Unit. All Schools provide students with details of the verification procedures.

Marked copies of assessments are kept for the External Examiner, who will make a judgement on the appropriateness of marking practices, which they will report at External Examination Boards and in the written report that is submitted to the Quality Enhancement Unit, and which must be addressed by the school in its planning for the next academic year.

The University uses Assessment Reports on the Quality of University Examinations (ARQUE) summaries as an additional mechanism to compare the marks awarded in different modules within and between years, and to compare the marks students achieve on each module with their performance in other modules. The system, which is maintained by Quality Enhancement Unit staff is primarily used to identify outlying modules at School Boards of Examiners' Meetings, but also identifies potential differences in student performance by gender. The use of ARQUE is routinely praised by External Examiners, who report that it supports transparent and constructive discussions on marks across modules and assures them that marking is consistent and non-discriminatory.

External Expertise

External expertise is utilized in the initial approval and validation of a degree programme and in annual quality assurance through the external examining process. Initial programme approval considers the assessment strategy in depth, using internal and external subject expertise in all cases. It ensures that teaching and assessment methods are aligned with sector-wide reference points such

as *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of Degree-Awarding Bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, and discipline-specific Subject Benchmark Statements. Programmes conferring professional recognition or Licence to Practise, such as Nursing or Social Work, must align with the standards of relevant Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). In these cases, the University supports PSRBs' close involvement in validation panels and ongoing monitoring. The same procedure is used to approve programmes reviewed through the 5-6 year revalidation cycle.

In addition to approving examination questions and examining marked assessment, External Examiners are requested to provide an annual written report, and oral comments, to the Board of Examiners. The report provides assurance that the standards of assessment and student performance are comparable with the standards of comparable UK HEI courses and align with national frameworks. In the rare instances where External Examiners raise concerns, the Quality Enhancement Unit ensures that Schools address these in full and these cases and responses are considered by the University's central Teaching and Learning decision-making body.

External Examiners reports are addressed through the University's annual review process for all modules and programmes. These reviews are completed by module and programme leads and, in addition to External Examiner comments, must address comparative student performance as set out by the ARQUE data, and student feedback (from various sources including module evaluation) together with pedagogically informed self-reflection.

External Examiners are selected, approved and trained in accordance with QAA Guidance on External Expertise.

3. ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

The University Council must ascertain that the University meets all standards set out in the *Quality Assessment Framework for Wales*. The Council is tasked with approving annual quality statements, which include assuring that: "The standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately set and maintained". An annual Quality Assurance Report helps satisfy the Council that the University continues to meet national expectations and regulatory requirements for degree standards.

As set out in the University's Charter, Senate is the "academic authority" of the University, responsible for "academic work". Senate is the ruling body on academic (but not managerial) matters and is responsible for all academic issues affecting the University.

The University Teaching and Learning Strategy Group is delegated by Senate to oversee the implementation of the Quality Assurance mechanisms set out above and considers issues relating to degree outcomes, student performance and degree classifications arising from ongoing internal and external review.

School Boards of Studies and Award Boards (that are sub-groups of Boards of Studies) are responsible for the quality of their awards and are subject to University regulations. Award Boards are attended by Quality Assurance officers in the year prior to Internal Quality Audits to verify that practices are being followed and External Examiners are also required to confirm that these Boards follow University regulations.

The Programme Enhancement Group, which is a sub-group of The University Teaching and Learning Strategy Group, considers annual Programme Level reviews. This group, chaired by the PVC for L&T, including College Directors of Teaching and Learning and Quality Assurance representation, reflects

on issues raised, best practice, trends across the University, enhancement opportunities and training needs.

All taught programmes are revalidated on a cyclical 5-year basis, usually as part of a school-wide validation of taught programmes. Concerns regarding the quality of teaching and assessment may trigger a validation outside the usual cycle.

4. DEGREE CLASSIFICATION ALGORITHM

The University uses a single algorithm to determine degree classifications for Bachelor's (Honours) Degrees. The calculation involves adding the overall percentage for year two modules to the overall percentage for year three modules with year the second average having double weighting: [L5 + (L6 x 2). For extended undergraduate degrees, the algorithm is [(0.4 x L6) + (0.6 x L7)], however, if approved at validation the year two (L5) modules may also be included as follows: [L5 + (2 x L6) + (3 x L7)]/6.

The Bachelor's algorithm has not been modified since the University received independent awarding powers in 2007, but it is subject to periodic review. One such review has been undertaken in the context of the UKSCQA *Principles of Effective Degree Algorithm Design*, and we are in line with these principles.

5. TEACHING PRACTICE AND LEARNING RESOURCES

Enabling our students to achieve the very best degree that they can is at the heart of Bangor University's ethos and is set out in the University's Teaching and Learning Strategy. A number of University-led enhancements to teaching and learning and student support have had an overall positive effect on degree outcomes at Bangor over the review period. These institutional-level actions dovetail with school and subject-level activities.

The University's Centre for Enhancement in Learning and Teaching (CELT) has been a focus for innovation, enhancement and support in all aspects of teaching and learning.

- CELT provides ongoing Continual Professional Development for academic staff across the University.
- CELT supports staff in achieving formal qualifications in higher education teaching via the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education and HEA Fellowship Scheme. During the period covered by this statement, there has been an upward trend in the success rate of application by staff for HEA Fellowships.
- CELT staff have been at the forefront of enhancement projects for teaching and learning in the University. Key enhancement themes include curriculum design, assessment and feedback. Work on assessment and feedback has resulted in Bangor's metric scores for the NSS on this topic being above the sector benchmark during the review period. In addition, as part of enhancement work on assessment and feedback, the University has overhauled its processes for students undertaking supplementary assessment, moving to a Summer-school approach. As an exemplar of best practice within the sector, the approach has since been adopted by a number of other Universities.

Bangor has been at the forefront of embedding the principle of co-production within curriculum design, validation and review. In addition, the University takes an evidence and data-led approach to

decisions around curriculum design and review, utilizing a range of qualitative and quantitative datasets.

The University has adopted the use of lecture capture software as a tool to support student learning. In addition. the University has continued to invest in teaching facilities (including laboratory and performance facilities), library services, social learning facilities and learning technology. Indeed, the quality of physical and virtual learning resources was noted in the University's Gold Teaching Excellence Framework evaluation.

The University provides a wide range of student support services and has developed its Request Centre system to enhance the management of student requests for support with their studies. In addition, the University has created Director of Student Engagement posts within academic schools. The combined effects of enhancements to teaching and learning and student support have seen Bangor consistently placed in the UK Top-10 for student satisfaction in the NSS during the review period.