



## Liverpool Hope University

### Degree Outcomes Statement 2019/20

Liverpool Hope has a robust, devolved system of quality assurance which ensures that responsibility for the maintenance of academic standards runs throughout the academic community with reporting to Senior Management and Council. The achievement of our students is an important marker of these processes. Table 1 summarises the key metrics over the past five years; Network of Hope students are taught by University staff at a number of offsite locations – they are registered students at one of the Network Colleges.

A more detailed summary of the institutional degree profile analysed by student characteristics [is available](#).

**Table 1: Summary of Student Achievement (Undergraduate) 2014-2019**

Location	% Students Achieving a First- or Upper Second-Class Award				
	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/8	18/9
Whole University	66.2	63.5	65.8	67.6	71.4
Liverpool Hope	65.9	64.1	66.3	67.5	71.8
Network of Hope	66.7	58.7	61.7	63.9	67.7

Between 2014/5 and 2016/7 the achievement of students was constant, but notably in each of the years fell significantly below the HESA National benchmarks. Specifically, the HESA figures for national achievement were 72% good degrees in 14/15; 74% in 15/6; 75% in 16/7 and 76% in 17/18.

In the last two years Liverpool Hope has reflected at length on the achievement of its students. Careful consideration has been given to the application of the University marking scales, and to the algorithm by which degrees are calculated. In 2017/8 Senate approved the introduction of a revised and standardised marking scale, with academic colleagues assigning grades to students work by alignment to a set of indicative assessment criteria. These criteria are aligned to the FHEQ common descriptors detailed in the QAA 2019 guidance. Each assigned grade attracts a standard mark; this is an equitable and consistent system which standardises marking outcomes for students across our Subjects and reduces individual variations. It is intended to give transparency for internal and examiners and arguably most importantly to students who can use these descriptors to formatively map their own performance. Furthermore, the indicative marking scales are now separated by level of study to allow much clearer application by markers and students alike. In 2018/9 'borderline' considerations in the Bachelor's degree algorithms were simplified; this review was informed by the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment publication of November 28<sup>th</sup> 2018 entitled "Degree classification: transparent, consistent and fair academic standards". The Hope algorithm is a differential system which has been in place since 2016/7; students overall aggregate is calculated in two ways, 10% of the Level C (4) outcome, 30% of Level I (5) and 60% of Level H (6) and 25% of Level I (5), 75% of Level H (6). No discounting of marks is considered and all course blocks are included in the calculation; the better of the two overall aggregates is selected. The dual algorithm has been retained over a number of years to recognise the importance the University places on first year studies which we consider to be a fundamental building block for our awards. However, we also recognise that exit velocity is an important indicator particularly for students whose achievement prior to coming to Hope fell below their potential. In

2018/19 the dual algorithm was enhanced by a simplified set of rules for borderline decisions; students whose overall aggregate was within 2 rounded points of a borderline between two classifications, and who had 60 credits of assessment at Level H within the higher classification of the two, were uplifted. This replaced a much more complex borderline consideration which was out of step with the recommendations of UKSCQA. The University is now assured that its algorithms and borderline uplifts are aligned with best practice in the sector. No further amendments are planned in the immediate future but the University is conversant with current considerations by the QAA of a more structured approach to institutional algorithms

The application of this simplified degree calculation, and the equity associated with the standard marking scale, has contributed to the increase in good degrees for the University as a whole. This is not an example of degree inflation, but instead reflects the successful review of practices that were contributing to an element of grade deflation at Hope. We are now experiencing grade levelling in terms of the National expectations. It is worthy of note that the University remains below the sector norm for good degrees which HESA noted was 76% across the UK for 17/18. This figure is made up of 28% 1<sup>st</sup> class awards and 48% upper class awards across the Sector. The data shown in Table 2 shows that Liverpool Hope students achieve fewer first class awards than the Sector norm, whilst more achieve upper seconds. The University is now considering, through its constant reflection of learning and teaching opportunities at Subject, Faculty and University level, how students can be facilitated in improving their outcomes between a first- and upper-class award. Interventions we have made to date have increased good degree outcomes largely by enabling more students to achieve a 2i award by enhancing their understanding of the characteristics of academic work in the higher bandings.

The achievement of students who enter the University with GCE A levels is consistently better than those who enter with the more vocationally focused BTEC qualification. In 2018/9 52% of BTEC entrants achieved 'good degree' outcomes whilst 80% of those with A levels on entry achieved this standard. Liverpool Hope is currently working to better understand the sets of characteristics associated with students who enter without A levels. This approach will enable us to determine the effects of multiple characteristics within this cohort rather than basing our approach on entry qualifications alone (the ABCS approach detailed in the [OFS report](#) of September 2019).

Gaps in achievement for students with other characteristics, including age, gender, ethnicity and disability have been carefully considered and will be addressed through a series of ambitious targets at all stages of the student lifecycle detailed in the [Access and Participation Plan](#).

In relation to the students that Liverpool Hope teaches at partner Colleges, St Mary's Blackburn and Holy Cross College Bury, the trends in student achievement largely parallel those at the Hope campuses. However, in each of the last four academic years achievement of students in the Network of Hope has fallen below that of students studying at the Hope campuses. Whilst the cohorts of students at Hope and in the Network of Hope are not directly comparable because of their different characteristics the achievement of Network students is a matter for reflection through the processes of the University partnership committees and the central Learning and Teaching Committee.

**Table 2: Summary of Student Achievement (Undergraduate) 1<sup>st</sup> and 2i outcomes 2014-2019**

Location	% Students Achieving a 1 <sup>st</sup> Award				
	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Whole University	16.4	14.4	18.3	19.2	20.6
Liverpool Hope	15.8	15.1	17.8	19.0	19.9
Network of Hope	21.1	9.1	21.8	21.0	29.3
Location	% Students Achieving a 2.1 Award				
	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Whole University	49.8	49.0	47.5	48.4	50.8
Liverpool Hope	50.1	49.0	48.5	48.9	51.9
Network of Hope	45.6	49.6	39.8	42.9	38.4

At Liverpool Hope University the degree outcomes statement is as an opportunity to present an important quality assurance in relation to the [Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy](#). The academic governance of our degrees is ensured through the attention that is given to the outcomes that are summarised in this statement; staff, students and external stakeholders are part of our process of ensuring the maintenance of standards beginning at staff student liaison, and moving through Faculty Quality, Learning and Teaching Committees, Network of Hope management Committees and onto central Academic/ Learning and Teaching Committees and ultimately Senate and Council. External Examiners are involved in all stages of our process from curriculum and assessment design through to determining final student outcomes. External Examiners are appointed after a rigorous process of scrutiny beginning at Faculty level and endorsed by Academic Committee and Senate. External Examiners are either highly experienced in this role, have engaged with the Advance HE professional development scheme or are required to undertake mentoring within a highly experience team of Examiners.

In 2019 the University revised its Academic Misconduct Policy in line with [The OIA Good Practice Framework: Disciplinary Guidance](#) and in 2020 has undertaken a thorough review of both its Academic Appeals and Mitigating Circumstances Policies. As a reflective community it is important that policies supporting academic process are continually aligned to best practice across the sector. The University carries out an equality audit at the end of each academic year to ensure that any notable differences in the use of these processes by students with particular characteristics is considered carefully.

**In summary, during the last three academic years, Liverpool Hope has reviewed and revised its marking schemes, borderline rules and academic policies to ensure that student success and achievement are supported fully by the University regulatory processes without compromise of academic standards. The University has set itself ambitious goals in closing achievement gaps for students through its Access and Participation Plan.**