



## Liverpool Hope University Degree Outcomes Statement Summer 2023

Liverpool Hope is a smaller institution with Ecumenical foundations that values its distinctive mission and values. We are an inclusive and diverse community that consistently exceeds its benchmarks for recruiting students with a disability, or from areas of high deprivation and low participation.

This statement provides assurance to all stakeholders of the maintenance of standards and of the value of Liverpool Hope qualifications. Liverpool Hope has a robust, devolved system of governance for [Quality Assurance](#), overseen by the University Academic Committee and including procedures for annual review and enhancement of programs within a five-yearly revalidation of provision. The achievement of our students is an important marker of these processes. Table 1 summarises the key metrics over the past five years; Hope delivers its awards at both our own campuses and in a small number of partner Further Education Colleges.

A more detailed summary of the institutional degree profile analysed for all students at Bachelors level since 2017/18 by subject, sex, ethnicity, and disability [is available](#).

**Table 1: Summary of Student Achievement (Undergraduate) 2017/22**

Student Group	% Students Achieving a First- or Upper Second-Class Award				
	17/8	18/9	19/20	20/21	2021/22
All Liverpool Hope	67.6 (820)	71.5 (836)	77.2 (838)	79.0 (875)	71.6 (787)
Studying at Hope campuses	67.5 (744)	71.9 (769)	77.2 (759)	79.5 (814)	72.6 (712)
Studying at Partner Colleges	63.9 (76)	67.7 (67)	76.7 (79)	72.6 (61)	65.5 (75)
<a href="#">National Data</a>	76 (306,995)	76 (313,220)	82 (329,730)	82 (353,300)	78 (327,840)

The avoidance of degree inflation continues to be a considerable concern sector-wide and we consider the production of our Degree Outcomes Statement to be an important opportunity for Liverpool Hope to demonstrate its obligations in relation to [Condition B4](#) of the Office for Students (OfS) ongoing conditions of registration. Condition B4 requires that the provider 'ensure that qualifications awarded to students hold their value at the point of qualification and over time, in line with sector recognised standards'. In line with the sector, we noted with some concern a marked increase in the proportion of first-class degrees awarded in 2019/20; alongside a further, albeit a much smaller, increase observed in 2020/21.

The achievement profile of our students noted in Table 1 indicates that the proportion of students achieving a 'good degree' is now within 0.1% of the 2018/19 outcomes. This represents a 7.4% fall in good degrees despite the University remaining in transitional regulations during 2021/22. However, we are mindful that first class awards in 2021/22 remain 5.8% higher than in 2018/19. As noted in previous Degree Outcome Statements in 2017/18 the University Senate approved the introduction of a [standardised marking scale](#), and a simplified set of borderline rules governing award classifications. Alongside, the University published a revised set of assessment criteria generating a more consistent system which standardised marking outcomes for students across our Subjects and reduced individual variations. The new system was intended to give transparency for internal examiners and arguably most importantly for students who can use the descriptors to formatively map their own performance. Given good degrees overall have returned to pre-pandemic levels and it is possible that our persistent increase in first class awards has resulted from these purposeful University policy changes. A proportion of high 2.1 students have simply moved across the classification border. However, in 2021/22

Liverpool Hope continued to use timed on-line assessments in place of in-person examinations for students in their final year of study. These continued adjustments may also offer a reasonable explanation for the continued elevation of first-class awards in 2021/22. Which of the two explanations is most likely will become clearer following the return to in person examinations planned for all students in 2022/23.

Student achievement in 2021/22 provided by the Higher Education Statistics Agency [HESA](#) indicated that 32% of the national student cohort achieved a first-class award, down 4% on the previous year; 46% achieved a 2.1 (unchanged); 17% achieved a 2.2 (up 3%) and 4% a third class (up 1%). HESA attributed the National decline in first class awards to the pressure exerted on providers to remedy the upward trajectory in good degrees and the sector-wide return to in person examinations. The data at Hope fits within this picture, first class awards decreased by almost 5%, 2.1 awards by 2.5%, 2.2 awards were up nearly 5% and 3rd class awards up by 2.5%.

Table 1 highlights an awarding gap between our students and the National Benchmark published by HESA. A particularly significant contributor to this gap is the achievement of students at Hope campuses who enter the University with more vocationally focused BTEC and non-A Level qualifications. 77% of those entering with A/AS levels achieved a good degree in 2021/22 compared to 65% of those entering without A Levels. Over the past five years there has been a persistent gap of 13 percentage points in the achievement of good degrees between A Level and non-A Level students. The University continues to place considerable emphasis on understanding the significance of characteristics of students on entry in relation to their final achievement at Liverpool Hope. In particular, we are focused on multiple characteristic analysis especially in relation to the entry qualifications and the achievement of students from areas of low participation and high deprivation. This ensures that our strategies to address this issue are not guided by entry qualifications alone but instead focus on barriers to success for these cohorts.

Gaps in achievement for students with other characteristics, including age, gender, ethnicity and disability have been thoroughly analysed and are addressed through the ambitions detailed in the 2020\_25 [Access and Participation Plan](#). We welcome a high proportion of disabled students at Hope (24% of our cohort), 76% of our disabled students achieved a 'good degree' in 2021/22, 5% ahead of non-disabled students. It is also worthy of note that the awarding gap between white and global majority students closed in 2021/22, reducing from 10% for first class awards and 14% for 2.1 awards to 3% and 11% respectively.

Directly linked to the avoidance of degree inflation are the principles for [effective degree algorithm design](#) developed by the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA). The QAA reports good practice to be the application of one of four algorithms a. Exit velocity (0/0/100 or 0/0/0/100); b. Emphasis on exit velocity (0/33/67 or 0/0/25/75); c. Equal weighting (0/50/50 or 0/0/50/50); d. inclusion (10/30/60 or 0/10/30/60). The Hope algorithm for degree calculation, founded in sound pedagogical principles, is currently 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. In 2018/19 the dual algorithm was enhanced by a simplified set of rules for making 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, are uplifted. The clarity of decision making through a predominantly [rule-based classification system](#) ensures consistency of Board outcomes which is particularly important given the high proportion of students studying a combined honours award.

Consideration of best practice in relation to algorithms is an important part of Liverpool Hope demonstrating its obligations in relation to condition B4 of the OfS ongoing conditions of registration, specifically that 'relevant awards granted to students are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously'. The University has pledged to review its current dual algorithm; to ensure avoidance of inflation and maintenance of credibility. However, our data analysis shows that the implementation of Emergency Regulations has impacted algorithm use and further monitoring is required. Of course, it is important to note that although one aggregate may recommend an overall better aggregate it will, in most cases, produce such a small difference as to leave the recommended classification unaltered. Nevertheless, the University will take a further year's data before making a final decision on implementation of a single algorithm.

In 2021/22 Liverpool Hope taught students at Holy Cross College Bury, St Mary's College Blackburn and Carmel College, Knowsley. In each of the last five academic years achievement in the Network of Hope has fallen below that of students studying at the Hope campuses; in 2021/22 the gap widened slightly between Network cohorts and Hope campus students. Whilst the cohorts of students at Hope and in the Network of Hope are not directly comparable, because of their significantly different characteristics, the achievement of Network students remains a matter for reflection through the processes of the University Partnership Committees.

All Liverpool Hope awards are aligned to the standards set by external reference points including the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#), The [Qualifications Framework](#), [Subject Benchmark Statements](#) and where appropriate the standards of [Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies](#). The academic governance of our degrees is ensured through the attention that is given to the outcomes that are summarised in the [Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy](#); 80.7% of our academic staff hold fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (35.6% above the sector average).demonstrating the commitment of the institution and its staff to the quality of learning and teaching. Staff, students and external stakeholders are part of our process of ensuring the maintenance of standards beginning at Student Voice Committee and moving ultimately through to Senate and Council. This begins with the rigorous processes of [Co-Design](#) before validation which confirms the details of the programme. External Examiners are appointed after scrutiny beginning at School level and endorsed by Academic Committee and Senate. They 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 experienced team of Examiners. External Examiners are involved in all stages of our processes from curriculum and assessment design through to assuring the quality of final awards. Their feedback is considered carefully at School and University level in order to assure ourselves that awards are achieved through fair application of [Liverpool Hope Regulations and Conventions](#) aligned to national expectations in line with other providers. On August 15th 2022 UKSCQA published guidance on External Examining Principles which reinforces the significance of the role and supports those who undertake it. Liverpool Hope has carefully reviewed its [Quality Handbook: External Examining](#) in light of the guidance document to ensure full compliance.

As for other Institutions Liverpool Hope is mindful of the risk posed to academic standards by misconduct and in particular the significant and emerging challenges posed by third party misconduct. The rapid developments in the use of artificial intelligence software such as ChatGPT or QuillBot to generate material for assessment must produce a measured response. The University revised its academic misconduct policy for 2022/23 with particular attention to the most serious penalties for third-party misconduct. However, we recognise the need to adapt and develop innovative assessment modes and embrace artificial intelligence appropriately; simply stamping this out will not be possible.

Aside from the growth in artificial intelligence, the most notable challenge for the University continues to be the requirement for considerable investment and development of on-line and inclusive practices to enhance our campus-focussed student experience. We have reflected on the good practice that developed from our experiences of the pandemic and we continue to ensure that we provide a flexible, modern learning environment post pandemic. As a community with a high proportion of students from low participation and high deprivation areas we are also concerned by the challenges that the ongoing cost of living crisis presents. Support for students who find themselves in financial difficulty has been increased and other schemes to ensure our students wellbeing at this time have been extended including an on-campus food cupboard and voucher scheme.

The Degree Outcomes statement was first produced by Liverpool Hope in July 2020; this statement was updated in July 2023 to reflect current student achievement and to update on good practice and institutional risks as required.