Liverpool Hope University Degree Outcomes Statement 2020/21

Liverpool Hope has a robust, devolved system of governance for Quality Assurance, overseen by the University Academic Committee and including procedures for annual monitoring of programs. 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 Further Education Colleges.

A more detailed summary of the institutional degree profile analysed for all students at Bachelors level since 2015/6 by subject, sex, ethnicity, and disability is available.

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

Location	% Students Achieving a First- or Upper Second-Class Award				
	15/16	**16/17**	**17/8**	**18/9**	**19/20**
Whole University	63.5	65.8	67.6	71.4	77.2
Liverpool Hope	64.1	66.3	67.5	71.8	77.2
Network of Hope	58.7	61.7	63.9	67.7	76.7

Between 2015/6 and 2017/8 the achievement of students showed consistent but small improvements, but notably in each of the years fell significantly below the HESA National benchmarks. Specifically, the HESA figures for national achievement were 74% good degrees in 15/16; 75% in 16/7 and 76% in 17/18.

Recognising the gap between the achievement of our students and the National data led to a careful period of reflection. In 2017/8 Senate approved the introduction of a revised and standardised marking scale, with academic colleagues assigning outcomes against marking scales indicative of the University assessment criteria. 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. Despite our amended assessment practices the percentage of students achieving a good degree remains several percentage points below the National Benchmarks which were 76% in 18/19 and 82% in 19/20 respectively. We are confident of the quality of our assessment practices and that they are stringent in the avoidance of grade inflation.

The Hope algorithm for degree calculation 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) <u>and</u> 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 recognises that first year is a fundamental building block for our awards but 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 was in line with the recommendations of the UK Standing

Committee for Quality Assessment publication (UKSCQA). It is worthy of note that in 2019/20 the University invoked its [Emergency Academic Regulations](#) to ensure that no student was disadvantaged whilst at the same time maintaining academic standards and included a safety net approach to no detriment.

In considering the attainment gap of our students in relation to National Benchmarks, we note that on entry 41.59% of students have A-levels with the remainder having other qualifications or a mixture of A levels and other qualifications. The achievement of students who enter the University with GCE A levels remains consistently better than those who enter with the more vocationally focused BTEC qualification (83% of those entering with AS achieving a good degree compared to 59% of those entering with BTEC). The University continues to place considerable emphasis on understanding the significance of characteristics of students on entry in relation to their final achievement Liverpool Hope. In particular, we are focused on multiple characteristic analysis rather than being guided by entry qualifications alone in order to provide clarity on barriers to success for these cohorts.

Gaps in achievement for students with other characteristics, including age, gender, ethnicity and disability have been thoroughly analyses and are addressed through the ambitions detailed in the 2020_25 [Access and Participation Plan.](#)

Liverpool Hope teaches students at partner Colleges, St Mary's Blackburn and Holy Cross College Bury, and the trends in student achievement largely parallel those at the Hope campuses. However, in each of the last five 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 significantly different characteristics, the achievement of Network students remains a matter for reflection through the processes of the University Partnership Committees.

In July 2020, UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) produced further guidance in relation to effective degree design. It is incumbent upon Liverpool Hope to reflect on its dual algorithm and the maintenance of academic standards in the six principles of design detailed in this latest UKSCQA documentation. This conversation is ongoing with the intention to move towards an approach that is aligned to the UKSCQA recommendations in due course; the outcome of the discussions will be detailed in the 2021/22 statement.

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 Student Voice Committee and moving ultimately through to Senate and Council. External Examiners are involved in all stages of our process from curriculum and assessment design through to assuring the quality of final awards. External Examiners are appointed after a rigorous process of scrutiny beginning at School 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.

As in other Institutions Liverpool Hope is mindful of the risk posed to academic standards by misconduct and continues to review its policies in relation to [Academic Misconduct](#) particularly with reference to third party involvement in assessment. The University carries out an equality audit at the end of each academic year to ensure that any notable differences in the use of [complaints and appeals](#) processes by students with particular characteristics is considered carefully.

Potentially, the most notable risk for the University at this time is the impact that the pandemic has had on students over the last two academic years, and which may continue to impact students for several years

to come. The University continues to monitor the achievement of its students and has made considerable investment in on-line and inclusive learning and teaching. Adjustments to assessments, progression requirements and mitigating circumstances have been made in 2019/20 and 2020/21 and may be required in future years. We continue to monitor the COVID impact and to support the health and wellbeing of all students at this challenging time.