



Hartpury University's Degree Outcomes Statement 2024

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Introduction

Hartpury College had a long history of teaching higher education courses, validated by UWE Bristol from 1997. It was awarded Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) in 2017 and gained the title of Hartpury University in September 2018. The University awarded its first degrees in the summer of 2019. During 2018-20 Hartpury University students were taught alongside UWE Bristol's Hartpury students as they completed their studies but since the 2020-21 academic year undergraduate students have been enrolled on Hartpury University awarded degrees only. To ensure a high quality student experience, degree outcomes were calculated and awarded using similar processes for both sets of students.

Hartpury University awards two level 6 qualifications, a Bachelor Degree Ordinary and a Bachelor Degree with Honours. No level 6 awards were delivered through partnership arrangements. No students enrolled between 2018 to 2023 with the aim of finishing their studies with a Bachelor Degree Ordinary. This statement will therefore cover final classifications for Bachelor Degree with Honours graduates only.

1. Institutional Degree Classification Profile

Hartpury University awarded classifications as shown below for all students. Due to the small numbers of students, fluctuations in percentages are expected and those seen below are within expected ranges. The proportion of students who gained upper (first and upper second) awards across 2019-24 was 67.8%, the same as from 2018-2023 but below sector figures (77% in 2022-23).

	Number	Third	Lower Second	Upper Second	First
2023-2024	503	8.0%	28.4%	39.2%	24.5%
2022-2023	459	4.6%	27.5%	43.1%	24.8%
2021-2022	412	3.9%	26.2%	41.0%	28.9%
2020-2021	424	2.4%	27.4%	44.6%	25.7%
2019-2020	356	5.3%	26.7%	40.7%	27.2%
5 year figures 2019-24	2154	4.9%	27.3%	41.7%	26.1%
5 year figures 2018-23	1947	4.7%	27.5%	41.7%	26.1%

A larger proportion of females gained an upper award than males. In 2023-24 the gap increased (mostly at first class level) to 18 pp following two years of reductions to 12.8 pp, although the gap in achieving their target awards decreased to 1 pp. This difference in achievement of male students remains a large

difference and a multi-department working group has been established to take action to address this through evaluating the impact of interventions including changes to assessment, increased explanation and introduction to support services and regular explanation and facilitated use of resources to develop study skills. The working group is reporting through the Access and Participation Plan reporting channels.

2. Assessment and Marking Practices

The University's Academic Regulations and Hartpury Quality Enhancement Framework align with the Office for Students' Ongoing Conditions of Registration to support quality, reliable standards and positive outcomes for all students, and the Quality Assurance Agency's revised UK Quality Code. They specify principles for validation and approval of assessment methods and support a systematic approach to continuous enhancement.

The Assessment Cycle, an appendix of the Academic Regulations, clearly states the University's commitments in ensuring the standards and enhancement of quality of its 'assessment for learning' approach. Marking at the University is based on the SEEC standardised criteria, used by many universities, which help to ensure marking is transparent, consistent and appropriate to the academic level. Internal Verification is carefully planned and External Examiners, at both module and programme level, are appointed in line with the QAA's *Advice and Guidance: External Expertise* publication. External Examiners are explicitly requested to review whether assessment standards meet expected sector reference points. This ensures that assessment and marking practices are scrutinised in terms of subject and quality, but also industry relevance and ability to develop employable graduates. The University ceased to operate under Force Majeure regulations in September 2021 following 2 years with amended assessment to support students during the national response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Lessons were learnt from the experience of protecting the principles of maintaining academic integrity, working with external examiners and accrediting bodies protecting academic progression and achievement. The University's board of examiners' system places emphasis on both a module's marking practices and assessment profiles as well as the student performance, holistically, on a course.

Hartpury University was an early adopter of the '*Professional Development for External Examiners*' course, now supported by the Office for Students and led by Advance HE. Many University module leaders have completed this course and Hartpury staff are recognised facilitators of the course. The content and the course has supported the professional development and awareness of sound assessment and marking practices and the role of external examiners within the University.

3. Academic Governance

3a. Boards of examiners

Academic Board delegates the authority to confer awards and agree assessments outcomes to boards of examiners. In 2023-24 the profiles of all students, except those on veterinary nursing programmes, were considered by the two tier examining board system used for all students between 2018 and 2022.

1. Module Examination Boards validate marks subject to external scrutiny of the standard of work by subject specialist external examiners. This is key to ensuring academic standards are in line with national benchmarks to protect the value of qualifications now and in the future.
2. Programme Examination Boards consider and verify all student profiles to determine progression from one level to the next or the award, in line with regulations and in discussion with the external

examiner who oversees a department's programme provision and ensures approaches used align with national benchmarks.

In 2023-24 veterinary nursing students' profiles were considered by subject specialist external examiners who scrutinised the standard of work and verified all student profiles as part of a single tier Programme Examination Board.

3b. Governance

An annual achievement report, scrutinised and approved by Academic Board, provides an annual assurance to the University's Governing Body about management and oversight of academic standards of awards. Achievement data, including upper awards, are scrutinised at programme, department, student group and study type levels. Actions are subsequently agreed and monitored and include examination of any apparent anomalies.

The Annual Quality Report to the Quality Enhancement and Standards Committee of the University's Governing Body considers all aspects of academic quality within the University and supports the consideration of achievement outcomes alongside other aspects, e.g. curriculum design, professional body and external examiner feedback to ensure a holistic view is taken. The Committee considers the report in detail on behalf of the Governing Body.

3c. Marking practices

Training in marking is given, in induction and regular updates, utilising the national framework to ensure sector comparability. There is a robust and thorough three layer internal verification system, which has been commended in previous QAA reviews. External Examiners scrutinise marking and feedback approaches and continuous enhancement of practice is ongoing.

3d. External assistance

This statement was produced utilising externally assured data, including external examiners, and taking account of the recommendations of external quality assessments.

4. Classification Algorithms

The University supports students during their adjustment to Higher Education. Its courses provide robust learning experiences that scaffold learning opportunities, whilst the student progresses up increasing academic levels of difficulty. It recognises that people learn from both success and failure and its courses include modules with early assessment points to provide such 'assessment for learning'. As such, a small number of level 6 and 5 credits and all marks from levels 3 and 4 may not be included within its classification algorithm for level 6 awards.

4a. The classification algorithm

To gain the award of Bachelor Degree with Honours a student must have completed academic modules at nationally recognised FHEQ study levels¹ specified within the Academic Regulations² dependent on their course and entry point or have been granted an aegrotat award³.

To achieve a Bachelor Degree with Honours the student needs to have met their course learning outcomes. The level 6 classification reflects how well they performed, and is based primarily on the student's performance at level 6. A student's overall award mark is calculated from either:

- a) the highest marks⁴ achieved for 100 credits at level 6 and the next highest marks achieved for 100 credits at level 5 or above. Marks achieved for the best 100 level 6 credits are weighted three times the value of the marks for the other credits; or;
- b) the highest marks achieved for 100 credits at level 6 if they enrol directly into level 6 study.

If a student does not pass a module at the first opportunity the mark will be reduced, unless there are proven reasons why further assessment is required. From 2021-22 this reduction (capping) has been applied as the University came out of Force Majeure Regulations that had applied during 2019-20 and 2020-21 in recognition of the exceptional global circumstances that affected students.

Degree classifications are then awarded, in accordance with common sector practice:

Overall Award Mark	Less than 50%	50% to less than 60%	60% to less than 70%	70% or more
Classification Awarded	Third	Lower Second	Upper Second	First

4b. Borderline cases

Hartpury University employs an arithmetic calculation to calculate eligibility for degree classifications. It recognises that, as it utilises module marks to two decimal places in the calculation of the overall award mark the calculation can produce overall award marks very close to the boundary between different classifications. Since 2020-21 academic year clarification on use of decimal places has meant that a percent starts at 0.5 % below until 0.4 % above. As such 69.5 % is considered 70 % and a first class. Students within 1.0 % of a boundary are given extra consideration by an examination board. There are regulatory criteria that specify when the student should be awarded the higher classification⁵ and that modules recognised as

¹ A student may complete modules to gain credit, by assessment or by recognition of their prior learning.

² Available from <https://www.hartpury.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-policies/policies-regulation-and-information/>

³ Where death, serious illness or a similar incapacity means that an enrolled student cannot complete their programme and there is evidence from previously submitted work that they could have achieved the necessary standard, an aegrotat award may be granted. Where the student has achieved at least 80% of the learning this may be classified.

⁴ If a student does not pass the module at the first assessment opportunity the mark for assessment is 'capped' at a pass mark, unless there are proven reasons why further assessment is required.

⁵ A student may be awarded the higher classification if:

- the majority of their credits at FHEQ level 6 fall in at least the upper boundary; or;
- there is an equal amount of credits (at level 6) in upper and lower boundaries, and the distinctive module stated in the programme's specification is in the upper boundary.

Credits affected by exceptional circumstances (including force majeure circumstances) do not count towards totals within the lower boundary.

being affected by exceptional circumstances (including force majeure circumstances such as the global Covid-19 pandemic) should not be the reason for a lower classification.

4c. Planned review

As sector practice around degree algorithms is increasingly shared, Hartpury University is committed to review its regulations, at least annually.

5. Teaching Practices and Learning Resources

No discernible effects of enhancements to teaching practices, learning resources, student support, curriculum and assessment design can be seen within the current data. During the 2019-20 academic year practices altered swiftly to support students during the national response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and some adapted practices continued during 2020-21. As future years' data become available, the University will monitor all changes carefully.

6. Identifying Good Practice and Actions

After only five years of awards, identification of further good practice and actions is being considered cautiously. Hartpury University's external examiners' feedback and data demonstrate that we consistently are able to support our students who declare a disability to us, enabling them to achieve comparably to other students. Additionally all Hartpury University's programmes include a careful balance of a wide range of assessment types including real-world and industry relevant assessments that have been consistently highlighted as good practice by external examiners and external stakeholders in preparing students for progression to future experiences, both in their studies and in their communities and future work environments.

The production of this Degree Outcomes Statement demonstrates Hartpury University's commitment to transparent practice. As future years' data become available, the University will seek to identify further good practice.

7. Risks and Challenges and Areas for Further Review

Hartpury University has introduced changes to the academic regulations intended to support and increase student engagement, including in submission of assessment and timely progression through their course. These changes do not change the classification algorithm, however increases in submission and timely progression are likely to increase the proportion of students that pass their modules at the first opportunity. The impact of these regulatory changes is being closely monitored, as is the impact on degree outcomes in the future.

Hartpury University is committed to keeping up with all changes to quality guidance and developments within higher education more generally. A cross institutional group has been established to monitor and evaluate practices around the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the industries the University serves and consider how the University uses AI and guide students and staff appropriately through this rapidly changing area, whilst protecting the academic integrity of its awards.