

Canterbury Christ Church University Degree Outcomes Statement 2022

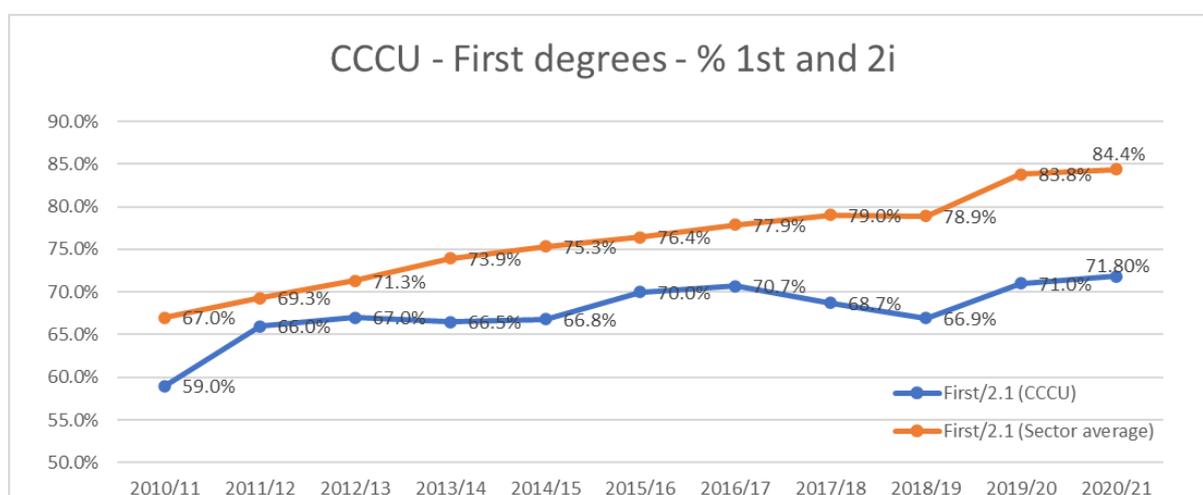
(UKPRN: 10001143)

1. Institutional Degree Classification Profile

1.1 Canterbury Christ Church University's degree classification profile is provided in the tables below. It sets out degree outcomes over the last eleven years, identifying the percentage of undergraduate degrees awarded in each class and the percentage of 1st/2i class degrees. All undergraduate degrees were awarded at level 6.

Classification of first degrees awarded by year

Figure 1: 11-year trend 1st/2i degrees awarded alongside the sector average



1.2 As shown in figure one, the number of 1st/2i degrees awarded at Christ Church has varied but followed a similar trajectory to the sector's. However, the number of 1st/2i degrees remained significantly below the sector average during this period and has not grown as fast as the sector average. Overall, the number of 1st/2i degrees awarded has risen between 2011-12 and 2020-21, the latest year for which we have data.

1.3 Over the last five-year period, the number of 1st/2i degrees awarded has remained relatively stable, returning in 2019-20 to the levels seen in 2016-17, with a slight rise in 2020-21 of 0.8 percentage points compared to the previous year. The University aims to remain broadly on a level with the last five years, notwithstanding the small Covid-19 uplift.

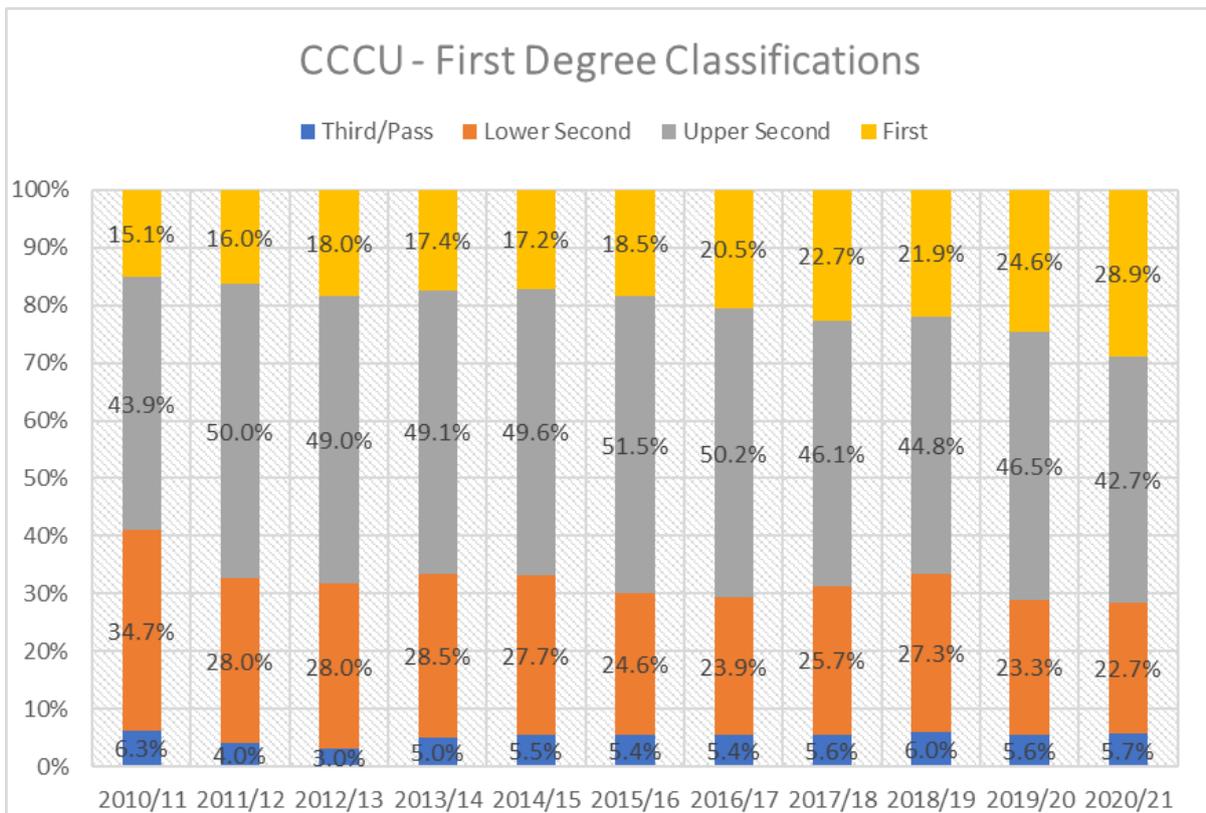
1.4 According to the OfS *Analysis of Degree Classifications over time* "[b]etween 2010-11 and 2020-21 there has been a 17.4 percentage point increase in first or upper second degree attainment rates"¹ across the sector.¹ The average rate of 1st/2i

¹ Office for Students. (2022). *Analysis of degree classifications over time*. Available at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/cd778d76-5810-488b-b1e6-6e57797fe755/ofs-202222.pdf>. Accessed 24/08/2022. (p.14)

awarded across the sector in 2020-21 was 84.4%, rising from 83.8% in 2019-20.² In 2020-21 at Christ Church, the rate of 1st/2i is awarded was 71.8%, 12.8 percentage points below the sector average. Between 2010-11 and 2021 at Christ Church there has been a 12.8 percentage point increase between first or upper second degree attainment rates.

1.5 The seven percentage point increase between 2010/11 and 2011/12 was the result of changes made across the University. During this period, the University established that there was an uneven distribution of the outcomes across different subjects, and worked to remove outliers in both directions. This aligned the rates of 1st/2i with sector norms.

Figure 2: 11-year trend first degree classifications



1.6 Figure 2 shows a 4.3% increase in 1st classifications awarded in 2020-21 compared to the previous year. Compared to last year, the 1st/2i rate at Christ Church has grown from 71.0% to 71.8%. This shows the growth is in the number of 1st awarded rather than overall 1st/2i degrees. This is likely to be due to the impact of the No Detriment policy put in place in 2019-20 to recognise the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (see 2.4 – 2.5 below).

1.7 The University produces a detailed Student Outcomes Report annually, which is considered at School, Faculty and University levels. The University ensures that there is a consistent understanding of student achievement within Faculties, Schools and Professional Service Departments, but it has not intervened in any way to influence the overall percentage of 1st/2i degree awards. The algorithm used to calculate the degree classification has remained unchanged during the last ten year period.

² Ibid., p.17.

- 1.8 A breakdown of the degrees by student characteristic for the 2020-21 academic year shows that:
- students from low participation neighbourhoods are awarded 1st/2i degrees at the same rate as other students at the University
 - there is no attainment gap where students have a disability or in terms of age between young and mature students
 - white students are consistently awarded a higher proportion of 1st/2i degrees in comparison with all minority ethnic groups.
- 1.9 It is a strategic priority of the University to eliminate any attainment gaps, and significant work is being undertaken to remove barriers to success, to challenge perceptions and to ensure that the sense of community of which the University prides itself encompasses all students. The University-wide Closing Our Gap project was fully established in 2019-20 to lead this area of work.

2. Assessment and marking practices

- 2.1 The University operates a two-tier system of Boards of Examiners.
- The first tier, a Module Board of Examiners, confirms marks and awards credit at module level for all students studying the modules, and reviews module performance against centrally-produced metrics.
 - The second tier, the Progression and Award Board of Examiners, uses those confirmed marks to confirm the progression of students and the classification of awards.
- 2.2 Both tiers make rigorous use of External Examiners, who ensure that standards are maintained and the awards are comparable to national expectations in the subject. External Examiners submit an annual report to the University and may write directly to the Vice-Chancellor should they wish to raise an issue.
- 2.3 The University has a single set of regulations for its taught awards, except where there are alternative requirements mandated by PSRBs, and an extensive range of supporting procedures. Together they provide a robust framework for assessment. University marking procedures mandate the rigorous use of moderation and second marking and set out the role of External Examiners in ensuring that marking standards are consistent and appropriate.

Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

- 2.4 In line with much of the sector, in recognition of the extraordinary circumstances experienced by students and staff as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the University's Academic Board approved a set of exceptional regulations for progression and award during 2019-2020, which applied to Foundation Year, Level 4, 5, 6 and 7. This included relaxing the progression arrangements for Foundation Year and Level 4 where this was not prevented by the requirements of Professional Statutory or Regulatory Bodies, extending the undergraduate compensation arrangements from 20 to 40 credits at each level, adapting the Extenuating Circumstances procedures, removing the 60 credit threshold requirement for

summer reassessment and applying a No Detriment policy to ensure that students' academic outcomes were not negatively impacted by the pandemic.

- 2.5 The University put these measures in place only for the period impacted directly by the Covid-19 pandemic. As shown in Figure 2 above, the impact of the No Detriment policy was seen in the outcomes of students who completed their studies in 2020-21. In 2021, the Academic Board assessed the impact of the regulatory changes on student progression, outcomes and performance and confirmed the full return of the standard University regulations for progression. There are no further students subject to exceptional regulations for the Covid-19 pandemic.

3. Academic Governance

- 3.1 The University's Academic Board is responsible for the conferment of all University awards and for assuring that the value of those awards, including those delivered in partnership with others, is maintained over time. The Academic Board exercises its oversight of academic governance through its Committees and Sub-Committees. It receives and approves an Annual Report on the maintenance of academic standards. This report has been provided annually to the University's Governing Body since the University acquired taught degree powers in 1995.
- 3.2 The University ensures compliance with the Office for Students general ongoing conditions of registration for quality, reliable standards and positive outcomes for all students through its policies and procedures. It utilises best practice for enhancement from the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*. The University's academic portfolio contains a significant number of courses that operate under the auspices of a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body [PSRB].
- 3.3 All courses must:
- conform to the Framework for Higher Education Awards
 - align with subject benchmarks where they exist
 - have an assessment strategy that delivers well-formulated Course Learning Outcomes.
- 3.4 Courses are approved by a University Panel, chaired by a senior member of academic staff and for courses with PSRB accreditation it is expected that PVC Deans will chair these approval panels. A subject specific external academic advisor must be involved at the course development stage and must confirm that a course meets national standards and subject expectations. No course may run until it is signed off by Academic Board.
- 3.5 The University directly approves all courses offered at its collaborative partners and maintains direct control over the management of quality and standards and student registration. All collaborative courses have a home in an academic School and a subject-specific Academic Link Tutor, who ensures that all University requirements are met, including those relating to assessment. A Memorandum of Agreement with each partner ensures that obligations are well understood.

4. Classification Algorithms

- 4.1 The University has a single algorithm for undergraduate bachelor's degrees that is varied only in four circumstances as set out in 4.3. The algorithm has the following attributes:
- Levels 5 and 6 determine 40% and 60% of the final calculation respectively
 - there may be compensation of 20 credits at each level, providing a student achieves an average for the level of 40% and no mark lower than 30%, except where PSRB or other professional requirements prohibit that
 - the mark for the lowest 20 credits is discarded at both level 5 and 6 for the purposes of the algorithm
 - there is no use of discretion and no procedure for raising or lowering borderline marks.
- 4.2 The University permits two reassessment attempts, both of which are capped. Where students have not passed a particular credit threshold, they are required to undertake reassessment with attendance to consolidate their learning. The University does not allow retaking of modules for uncapped marks. This revised regulation for reassessment was introduced in Sept 2017 following an extensive review of the assessment regulations to ensure alignment with the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy.
- 4.3 The four exceptions to the algorithm are as follows:
- for Integrated Masters Degrees, the weighting is level 5, 20%, level 6, 30%, level 7, 50%
 - in a small number of degrees, where 240 credits at levels 4 and 5 are followed by more than 120 credits at level 6 to meet the requirements of PSRBs, the weighting is level 5, 10%, level 6, stage 1, 30%, level 6, stage 2, 60%
 - where a student enters with advanced standing into level 6, the classification is based entirely on the level 6 marks
 - in the exceptional circumstances where a PSRB's requirements may conflict with the degree classification algorithm, special regulations would be approved by Academic Board to account for those requirements.
- 4.4 The University undertook a detailed review of its classification algorithm in 2017/18 in order to ensure that it was able to deliver the ambitions of the University *Learning and Teaching Strategy*. The report, *Degree Classification over time* (2018) was approved by Academic Board and supported by the Governing Body.
- 4.5 The Report reflected on two sector-wide papers, UUK and GuildHE, *Understanding degree algorithms* (October 2017) and the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment, *Degree Classification: Transparent, Consistent and Fair Academic Standards* (November 2018). It considered at length the case for either eliminating the discounting of 20 credits or discounting both the highest and lowest mark. It took the decision to retain the discounting of 20 credits, as a means of delivering its *Learning and Teaching Strategy*, enabling students to experiment in subject terms without detriment to their overall classification, and supporting the commitment to

widening participation. This was subsequently mapped against the principles in UKSCQA, *Degree Classification Transparency, Reliability and Fairness – A Statement of Intent* (May 2019) to confirm the continuing validity of the University's review.

5. Teaching Practices and Learning Resources

- 5.1 The University has invested significantly in creating an infrastructure to support the delivery of its learning and teaching. Its commitment to educate the whole person, through developing excellence in learning and teaching, delivering bespoke and scheduled staff development, and playing a key role in driving pedagogical innovation and enhancing assessment literacy is central to its learning and teaching strategy.
- 5.2 The University keeps its grading criteria under periodic review to ensure continued alignment with sector minimum standards and best practice. In 2021-22, we completed a review exercise to ensure that our grading criteria continues to adhere to the sector recognised standards adopted by the Office for Students.
- 5.3 The University is fully committed to the objectives of the UK Professional Standards Framework and Fellowship of the HEA is valued as a means of both ensuring that academic staff are able to deliver high-quality and innovative learning and teaching, and that such activity is appropriately recognised and rewarded.
- 5.4 The University was one of the first universities to gain accreditor status when it was introduced in 2013, and has had verifier status since 2016.
 - All new members of academic staff are required to complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice, which confers Fellowship, and are allocated to a mentor for the PGCAP and also a mentor within their School.
 - The University Certificate in Academic Practice (UCAP, which articulates with the PGCAP), provides sessional part-time, and professional service staff with an opportunity to enhance their learning and teaching as well as acquire Associate Fellowship of the HEA.
 - The University's promotion structure requires Fellowship of the HEA for promotion from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer and Senior Fellowship of the HEA for promotion to Principal Lecturer, while Fellowship of the HEA is mandatory for those applying for a Readership.

6. Identifying Good Practice and Actions and Review of Progress

- 6.1 Action currently being taken to close the University's attainment gap is outlined in its *Access and Participation Plan*, available at www.canterbury.ac.uk/outreach/docs/Access-and-Participation-Plan-20-25.pdf.
- 6.2 The University has been taking specific and targeted action to close its BAME attainment gap, as set out in the *Closing Our Gap Strategic Framework*, under the areas of culture, curriculum and community. From academic year 2022-23, the University is enhancing its approach to course monitoring by introducing Course Performance Plans, a revised, real-time approach to course performance monitoring and action planning. This change will support clear assessment of the performance of each course in relation to *Closing Our Gap* and other key performance metrics,

including NSS, OfS student outcomes benchmarks and, where relevant, TEF benchmarks.

Supporting Sector Principles

- 6.3 The University's grading criteria aligns with sector recognised standards for degree classification descriptors.
- 6.4 The University has reviewed its practice against the UKSCQA External Examining Principles and is in alignment.

7. Risks and Challenges

- 7.1 The University continues to monitor its outcomes and ensure that its algorithm remains fit for purpose and will continue to reflect on any sector-wide developments. The key institutional risk in relation to degree outcomes is the Black and ethnic minority attainment gap and it therefore is a top institutional priority that is included in our Course Performance Plans, institutional targets and KPIs.