Degree Outcomes Statement
1 Institutional Degree Classification Profile

Harper Adams University is a small specialist provider of land-based Higher Education. The University currently also validates the level 6 and level 7 land-based HE provision at Askham Bryan College. Both the University and its partner operate under a single set of assessment regulations across all programmes and the recent degree classification profile is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of Harper Adams University Student Achievement since 2017/18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Student Numbers</th>
<th>1st class</th>
<th>Upper second class</th>
<th>Lower second class</th>
<th>3rd class</th>
<th>BSc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2022/23</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021/22</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020/21</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019/20</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018/19</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please note that rows may not sum to 100% due to a small number of interim awards and deferred assessments

Having considered the achievement data over the last five years, we have observed the following trends:

- The proportion of ‘upper’ Honours degrees (1st class and 2:1) was modestly reduced in 2022/23 (by 1.3%) compared to the previous academic year. This is attributed to the assessment regulations adopted in 2022/23 which introduced a revised degree classification algorithm and changes to the requirements for borderline upgrades;
- The reduction in BSc awards is linked to a higher proportion of students achieving their intended Honours degree award in 2022/23. The BSc statistic above does not include those students for whom the BSc was their intended award (e.g. BSc Top-up students);
- Home and EU students (representing approximately 84% of our students) achieved a greater proportion of good honours degrees than our international students (approx. 16% of our total students), although this gap narrowed in 2022/23 to a 6.5% difference. This improvement is linked to the revised post-pandemic assessment arrangements adopted by the University;
- When reviewed by student personal characteristics (i.e. disabled, BAME and POLAR4 Q1 (low participation neighbourhoods) students, achievement is typically within 3% of the overall achievement levels of the University. For students entering Higher Education with vocational qualifications, achievement in 2022/23 was 9% lower than the overall achievement level, which is considered to be linked to the impact of COVID in the initial stages of the study. The University closely monitors the achievement of all students, particularly within the context of the 2020-25 Access and Participation plan;
- A closer evaluation of the data indicates a difference in the attainment between male and female students across all subject areas, with achievement of upper degrees typically 7 percentage points higher for female students. The University has various actions in hand to reduce and minimise this attainment gap, including more inclusive assessment diets and revised student support arrangements.
2 Assessment and Marking Practices

The University assures itself that assessment criteria meet sector reference points as follows:

- Programmes are designed and developed to ensure alignment to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), national credit frameworks and subject benchmark statements;
- The use of University approved examination and coursework marking schemes to ensure consistency across the different academic departments within the institution;
- External examination of its programmes, which is based upon the expectations within the QAA Quality Code, which also considers the standards outlined within the FHEQ. Both module and award level examiners are appointed (27 for Harper Adams and 5 for Askham Bryan in 2022/23) to ensure that cross-sector comparability is achieved at subject and institutional levels.
- All student assessments are internally sample double marked/moderated, with student assessments at level 5 and higher additionally reviewed by external examiners;
- The continuing professional development of academic staff through engagement in the HE community, acting as external examiners, undertaking research and scholarship, engaging in knowledge exchange and support for high levels of staff attainment of fellowship at all levels from Advance HE;
- Each of the aspects detailed within this section also apply equally to the University’s FE partner;
- For our FE partner, the University also supports staff development activities (where appropriate) to underpin awareness of key policies and procedures and/or pedagogic developments.

The University appoints suitably qualified external examiners from other UK institutions to verify that the University’s academic standards are comparable with national expectations, via attendance at Assessment Boards where marks and awards are confirmed and through submission of a formal annual report. To date, we have consistently received endorsement of the standards of the modules and awards offered by the University.

3 Academic Governance

The University operates well developed quality assurance processes to protect and maintain the academic standards of its awards. On behalf of the University’s Academic Board, the Quality and Standards Committee monitors the academic standards and quality of our awards (including those of our FE partner) via routine annual monitoring and the periodic review and (re)validation of awards, under the procedures defined within the Academic Quality Assurance Manual. The University’s Academic Board endorses and provides an annual statement to the Board of Governors on the extent to which academic standards and quality of learning opportunities are being maintained and effectively managed. The University’s Academic Board membership also includes an external Governor with significant HE experience, which further ensures that the academic arrangements are effectively monitored at the highest level.

To ensure consistency between the University and our FE partner, an annual partnership review is undertaken and the University’s Quality and Standards Committee includes a representative from Askham Bryan College. Furthermore, the examination boards which confirm module results and award outcomes at our FE partner are chaired by a senior member of Harper Adams University and adopt the same marking criteria and assessment regulations as all other modules/awards validated by the University.

4 Classification Algorithm

The University operates a single classification algorithm for all undergraduate (level 6) students (including students who are studying with our FE partner). For each of the graduating cohorts reflected in Table 1, the algorithm is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undergraduate study level</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Weighting within Calculation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 4 (typically year 1)</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5 (typically year 2)</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6 (typically year 4)*</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All HAU undergraduate awards include a mandatory 12 month placement period
In common with the majority of UK HE providers, level 4 modules are not included within the classification algorithm, with the majority of the classification weighting applied to the level 6 modules studied in the final year. This enables the students to draw upon skills and knowledge developed during the industrial placement year to underpin their analysis and evaluation of complex problems.

The final classification is determined by the algorithm above, plus a review of those student profiles which are in a ‘borderline’ position i.e. within 1% of the higher classification level. The University operates a rule-based approach to determine if a student is eligible for an upgrade to the final classification of their award, with no discretion.

5 Teaching Practices and Learning Resources

A number of key enhancements underpin our teaching practices and support for learning:

- A high proportion of academic staff (circa 80%) (and a growing number of support staff) with an accredited teaching qualification (including the opportunity to enrol on an in-house Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Supporting Learning in HE accredited by Advance HE).
- An increase in the provision of student support arrangements, including academic guidance, support for students with specific learning needs, alongside enhanced mental health and wellbeing support;
- Ongoing investment in physical resources to support the curricula including significant recent investments in our veterinary health facilities, expansion of the companion animal facility, the creation of collaborative working spaces within the Library and the forthcoming refurbishment of Engineering facilities;
- Introducing greater emphasis on formative assessment within the curriculum for students, enabling the volume of summative assessment to be reduced. Work has also been undertaken to ensure that assessment diets are suitably inclusive for all students.

6 Identifying Good Practice and Actions

Internal good practice identification and action planning to share such is predominantly focused on improving the quality of learning opportunities, given the adoption of institution-wide assessment policies and procedures. In particular:

- The University’s Assessment Regulations are predominantly rule-based to ensure consistency of Board outcomes across all disciplines;
- The University has a cross-institution marking scheme for discursive examinations to promote a common understanding of standards amongst academic staff;

The University’s Quality and Standards Committee receives an annual overview of standards and the quality of learning opportunities. This report (and a separate report for the University’s FE partner) draws upon internal and external student quantitative data (including progression, achievement and student satisfaction), internal and external qualitative data (including external examiner feedback, student survey feedback and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies). The Annual Overview Report results in the creation of a University-wide Quality Enhancement Plan and the identification of exemplary/innovative practice for dissemination.

Since the end of COVID restrictions, the University has re-introduced its annual Learning and Teaching Conference, which provides access to a range of keynote speakers (both internal and external colleagues) allowing both academic and support staff the opportunity to explore and share good practice in advance of the new academic session.

7 Risks and Challenges

The University is confident that the standards of its awards remain high, as evidenced by feedback from external examiners. However, one area of both risk and challenge to the University (and the entire HE sector) is how assessment practices will need to evolve to respond to the impact (and use) of Artificial Intelligence. In addition, although teaching and learning is no longer subject to COVID restrictions, the University remains aware of the need to ensure that the transition from FE to HE is managed effectively for cohorts yet to be recruited who experienced disruption to their pre-HE studies as a result of the pandemic.