



PRIFYSGOL  
**BANGOR**  
UNIVERSITY

# Degree Outcomes Statement

## 2020/21



This statement provides an analysis and overview of the trends in degree classification profiles between 2016/17 and 2020/21. In addition, the document contains a description of the University's algorithm for calculating undergraduate degrees and an overview of the practice within the institution to ensure oversight of the assessment and examining process.

## 1. INSTITUTIONAL DEGREE CLASSIFICATION PROFILE

The profile of undergraduate degree outcomes at Bangor University over a five-year period up to the academic year 2020/21 is given in table 1. The proportion of 1st and 2:1 degrees combined (hereafter referred to as *good degrees*) has increased year on year over the period, driven by the considerable increase in the proportion of 1<sup>st</sup> class degrees awarded (+19% since 2016/17). There has been a substantial and concurrent reduction in the proportion of 2:2 and 3rd Class or Pass degrees over the same period.

Relative to the sector, the latest publication of The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide ranks Bangor in 85<sup>th</sup> position (out of 132) for the 1<sup>st</sup>/2:1 indicator.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
1st Class honours	25%	28%	29%	40%	44%
Upper second class honours	44%	43%	43%	40%	39%
Lower second class honours	24%	23%	24%	17%	14%
Third class/pass	7%	5%	4%	3%	2%
1st/2:1 (%)	69%	71%	72%	80%	83%

Table 1. Undergraduate degree outcome profile for Bangor University 2017 – 2021

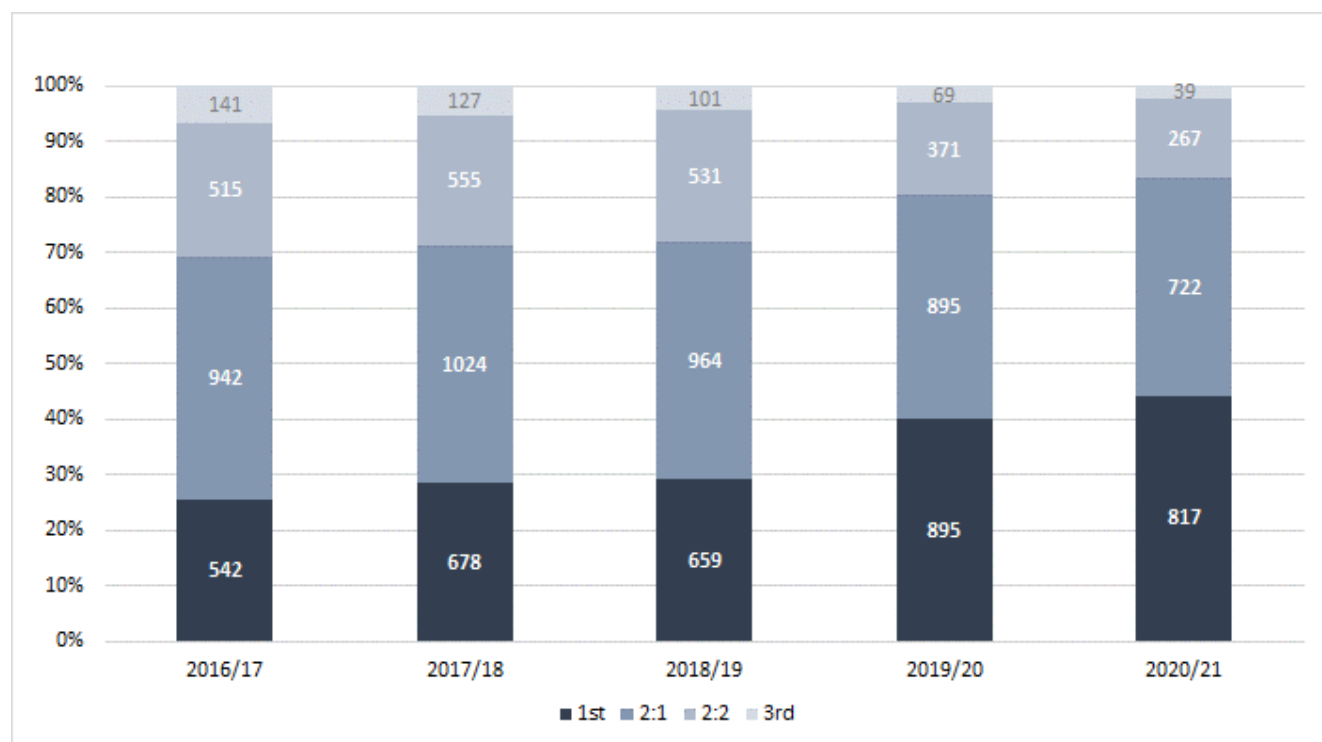


Figure 1. Distribution of undergraduate degree outcomes for Bangor University 2016 – 2021

The proportion of different degree classifications by subjects <sup>1</sup>at Bangor, for 2020/21, is given in Figure 2. There is some variation in degree class between subjects, with the proportion of first class awards ranging from 74% for Welsh & Celtic Studies, to 26% for Modern Languages. The proportion of 2:1 degrees ranges from 66% for Modern Languages, to 19% for Electronic Engineering.

The proportion of 2:2 awarded is highest in Health Sciences (non-HEIW) with 3<sup>rd</sup> class degrees highest in Health Sciences (HEIW). The range across all subjects for the proportion of 2:2 and 3<sup>rd</sup> Class degrees awarded is 28% and 10%, respectively.

The range of good degrees awarded also varies, with Music Drama & Development, and Welsh & Celtic Studies, awarding 100%, and seven subjects awarding above 90%: Law, Philosophy & Religion, Education (ITE), Chemistry, Environment Natural Resources & Geography, Modern Languages, and Linguistics & Bilingualism. The proportion of good degrees awarded is below the University average of 83% in seven subjects: Computer Science, Business, Medical Sciences, Electronic Engineering, Education (non-ITE), Health Sciences (non-HEIW), and Health Sciences (HEIW).

There is a range of 32% between the highest, and lowest, proportion of good degrees awarded across subjects at Bangor University.

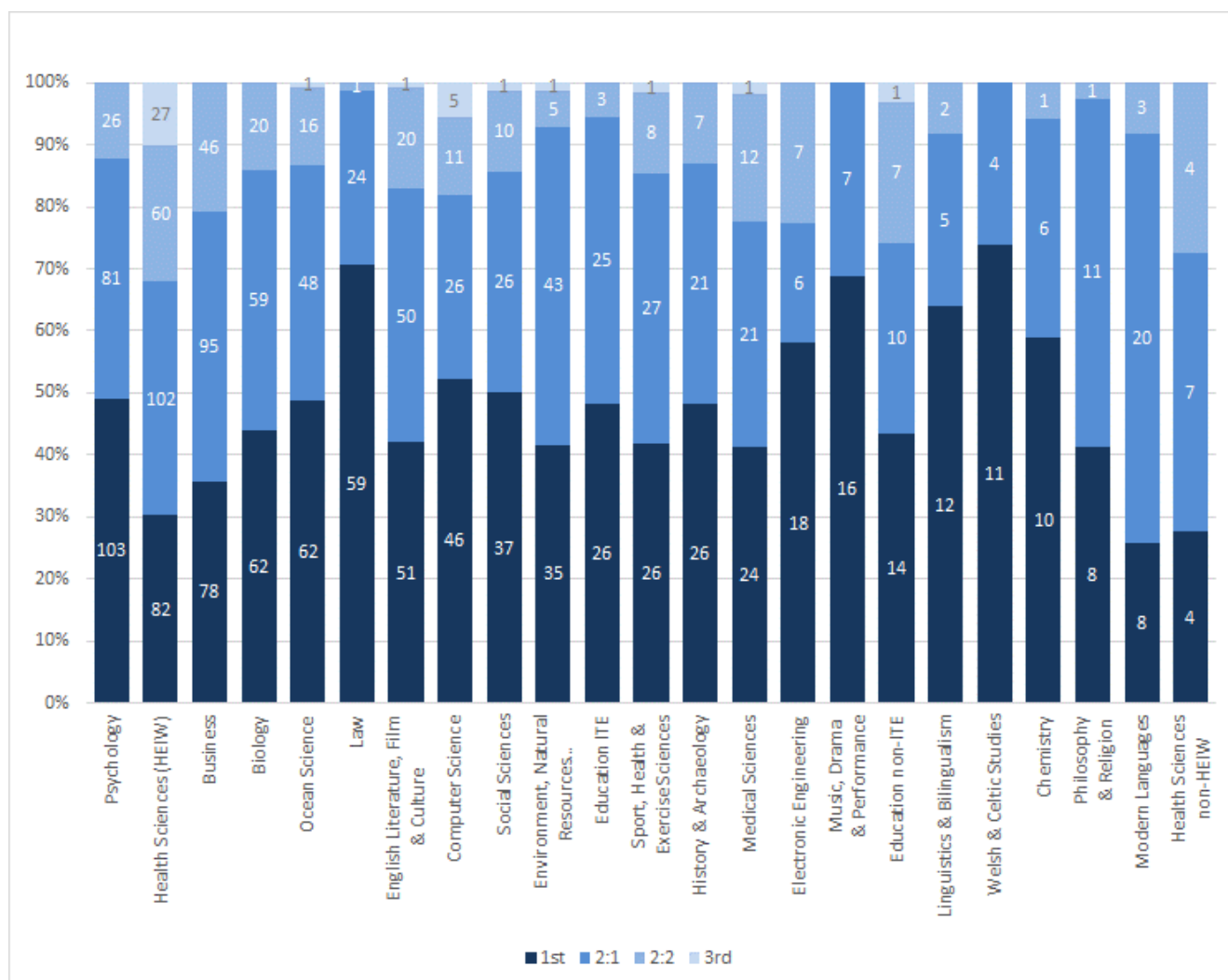


Figure 2. Distribution of undergraduate degree outcomes for Bangor University 2021, by subject

<sup>1</sup> This is an internal classification of subjects at Bangor University, based on the subject area of the degree course.

## 2. DEGREE CLASSIFICATION TRENDS AND STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

As part of its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, the University is undertaking routine analysis of degree attainment for a range of demographic characteristics. The University is committed to driving down and eliminating attainment gaps where they are identified. These commitments with respect to Welsh students are encapsulated in the University's Fee and Access Plan. Table 2 provides summarized data for the attainment of good degrees for six demographic characteristics. Data in Table 2 relates to all undergraduate students, including international students, except for: low participation, which is a UK-specific measure (based on students from POLAR areas) and Widening Access, which relates to Welsh domiciled students only (based on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation).

The data indicate that across the review period, the data for all demographic characteristics largely mirror the overall University dataset, showing an increase in the proportion of students achieving a good degree (Table 2) in all but one group (low participation). However, the data do indicate that there is some variability in the proportion of good degrees awarded between different demographic characteristics. Across the demographic characteristics, attainment gaps of varying sizes do exist in the proportion of good degrees awarded (ranging +3.0 to -11.4%), it is positive to note that these reduced in 2021 for many groups.

Across the review period, female<sup>2</sup> students have generally attained a higher proportion of good degrees than males, with the gap at its widest in 2018 and 2019 (+7%). Figure 3 demonstrates that the gap has narrowed thereafter, but female attainment remains higher (+3% in 2021). This is the only underrepresented group that achieves a positive attainment gap.

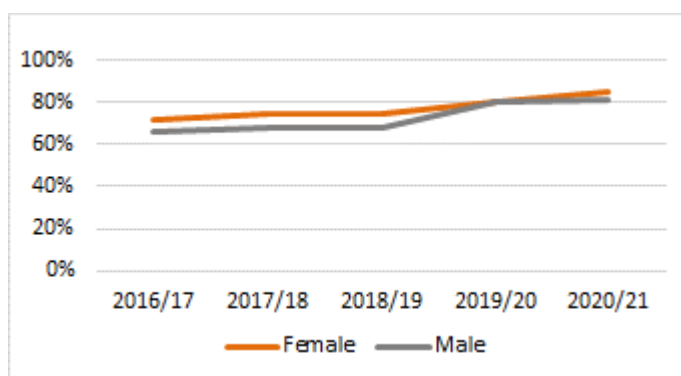
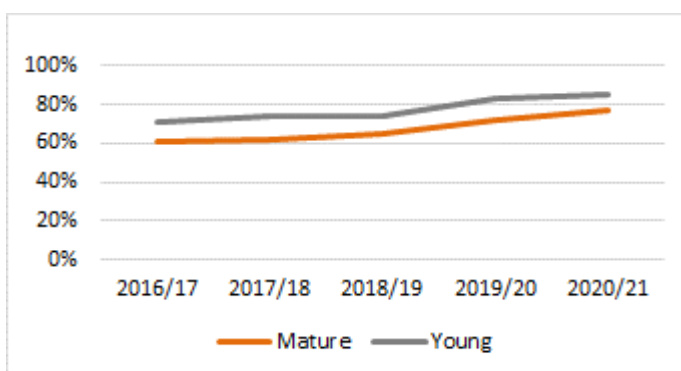


Figure 3. 1<sup>st</sup>/2:1 degrees awarded by gender: 5 year trend

Whilst there has been an increase in the proportion of mature students achieving a good degree over the review period, there are significant and consistent differences in proportions of good degrees awarded by age, as highlighted by Figure 4. The data identify achievement by mature students as a particularly necessary area of focus for the University moving forward.



<sup>2</sup> Based on the sex of the student. HESA provide an "Other" category, but insufficient numbers mean we cannot report on data outside the binary definitions of "Female" and "Male" at present.

Figure 4. 1<sup>st</sup>/2:1 degrees awarded by age: 5 year trend

The proportion of students with a disability achieving a good degree is 2% below the University average, although it is positive that the gap between students with and without a disability is narrower than other groups reported (Figure 5). The gap has widened from -0.5% in 2020, to -3% in 2021 (Table 2).

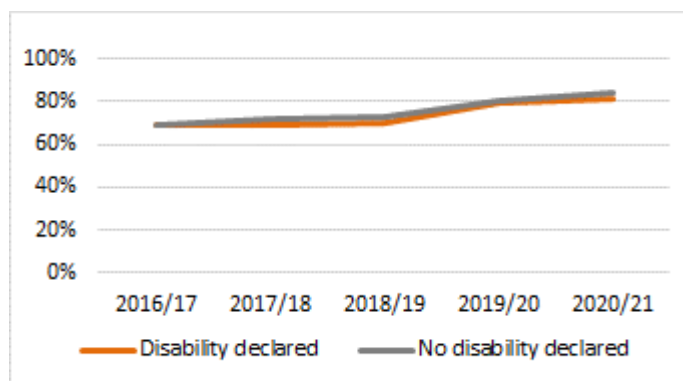


Figure 5. 1<sup>st</sup>/2:1 degrees awarded by disability status: 5 year trend

The disparity in degree attainment within ethnic groups is substantial (Table 2). The proportion of BAME<sup>3</sup> students achieving a good degree has increased over the review period, however an attainment gap is evident during this time. The gap has narrowed in recent years, but BAME attainment was 9% below that of white students in 2021, and 8% below the University average. The data identify that eliminating this attainment gap is a particularly necessary area of focus for the University moving forward.

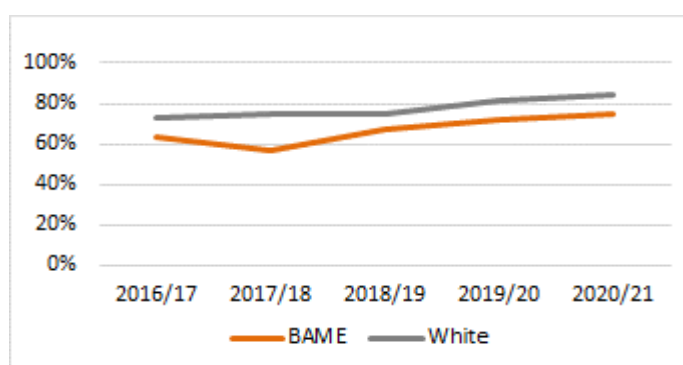


Figure 6. 1<sup>st</sup>/2:1 degrees awarded by ethnic group: 5 year trend

Students from low participation areas<sup>4</sup> (LPN) generally have lower attainment levels than students from higher participations areas. The attainment gap has widened significantly in 2021 (-11%), and the proportion of good degrees awarded to students from LPN areas has decreased in 2021 (-4% since 2020), and is 5% below the University average.

<sup>3</sup> The University is currently reviewing the use of BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) as a reporting category, and is in the process of agreeing new and more appropriate terminology.

<sup>4</sup> Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPN) are based on the POLAR 4 methodology, which identifies areas with traditionally low HE participation levels. LPNs are those areas in the bottom two quintiles of areas as defined by POLAR4. This only applies to young, full-time, UK domiciled students



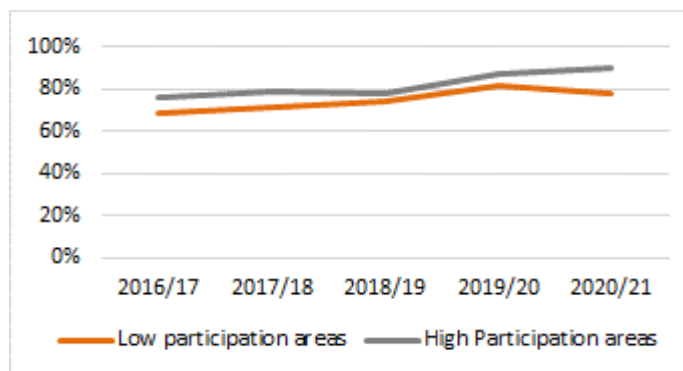


Figure 7. 1<sup>st</sup>/2:1 degrees awarded by widening participation measures: 5 year trend

Students from areas of Wales classified as the most deprived<sup>5</sup> have generally attainment a lower proportion of good degrees, compared to students in the least deprived areas of Wales. The attainment gap was at its widest in 2018 (-10%), but has improved year on year with the gap closing significantly in 2021.

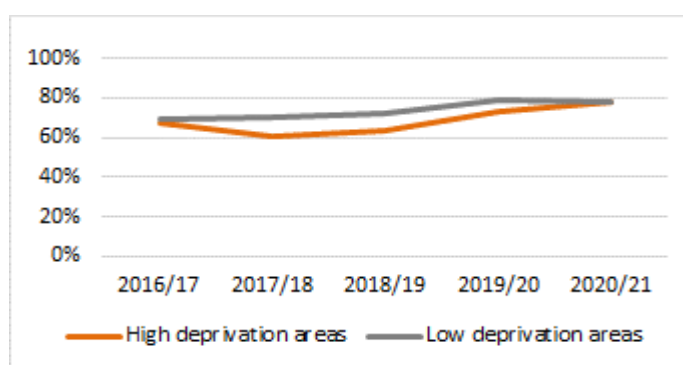


Figure 8. 1<sup>st</sup>/2:1 degrees awarded by widening access measures: 5 year trend

		2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Gender	Female	71.9%	74.1%	74.9%	80.3%	84.5%
	Male	65.9%	67.4%	68.1%	80.1%	81.6%
	<b>awarding gap</b>	<b>5.9%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>
Age	Mature	61.4%	62.1%	64.8%	72.2%	77.2%
	Young	71.5%	74.1%	73.9%	82.9%	85.6%
	<b>awarding gap</b>	<b>-10.1%</b>	<b>-12.0%</b>	<b>-9.1%</b>	<b>-10.8%</b>	<b>-8.3%</b>
Disability	Disability declared	68.7%	69.0%	69.9%	79.9%	81.2%
	No disability declared	69.5%	71.9%	72.4%	80.4%	84.1%
	<b>awarding gap</b>	<b>-0.8%</b>	<b>-3.0%</b>	<b>-2.5%</b>	<b>-0.5%</b>	<b>-3.0%</b>
Ethnicity	BAME	63.6%	56.9%	67.5%	71.6%	75.2%
	White	73.2%	74.8%	74.7%	81.8%	84.3%
	<b>awarding gap</b>	<b>-9.6%</b>	<b>-17.9%</b>	<b>-7.3%</b>	<b>-10.2%</b>	<b>-9.1%</b>
Participation	Low participation areas	68.8%	71.3%	74.3%	81.7%	78.1%
	High Participation areas	76.4%	78.9%	77.5%	86.7%	89.5%
	<b>awarding gap</b>	<b>-7.6%</b>	<b>-7.6%</b>	<b>-3.3%</b>	<b>-5.0%</b>	<b>-11.4%</b>
Widening Access	High deprivation areas	67.1%	60.2%	63.6%	73.0%	77.5%
	Low deprivation areas	69.0%	70.5%	71.8%	78.5%	78.4%
	<b>awarding gap</b>	<b>-1.9%</b>	<b>-10.4%</b>	<b>-8.2%</b>	<b>-5.5%</b>	<b>-0.9%</b>

Table 2. Undergraduate degree profile, by student demographic groups

<sup>5</sup> Students from Wales who are domiciled in the bottom two quintile in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation are classified as living in the most deprived areas; those from the highest two quintiles are defined as from the least deprived

### 3. ASSESSMENT AND MARKING

The University has in place a set of principles that governs its approach to assessment. These are set out in an *Assessment Framework*, produced in 2018, which was commended in the University's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Enhancement Review Report (2018). The principles are wide-ranging, encompassing for example assessment design and detailed guidance on assessment weighting and equivalence.

The *Assessment Framework* is available to staff and students and is intended to ensure that staff and students share common expectations of assessment. The *Assessment Framework* outlines the expectation that assessment must incrementally reflect the level of study and deliver an appropriate degree of academic challenge to students. Those designing assessments are required to ensure that assessment genuinely measures students' attainment of the relevant learning outcomes and provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate that attainment to the highest level possible.

All assessments must be mapped to at least one module learning outcome. These are linked to programme learning outcomes and reflect subject benchmark statements where available and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements where relevant. Programme and module learning outcomes are grouped according to the criteria set out in the QAA's degree outcome classification descriptors including professional competencies where relevant. The linkages of module learning outcomes to programme learning outcomes and subject benchmark statements are made explicit on the programme specification, which is maintained centrally by the Quality Enhancement Unit. Assessment approach and mapping to learning outcomes are considered during module validation.

#### 3.1. Marking, verification and Examination Boards

As set out in the University's Regulations for Taught Programmes, an External Examiner must approve all questions used in examinations that count towards an award, in order to assess the appropriateness, relevance and level of questions according to their knowledge of sector norms.

Students use marking criteria to understand what they are expected to achieve. The University uses subject-specific marking criteria that reflect the disciplinary and professional context of a programme. Module and assessment specific marking criteria are also made available to all students.

The University's Regulations for Taught Programmes set out the process for the verification of marks and the purpose of this. Marks for all modules across the University are verified each time they are taught. Each School has procedures to deal with major differences between markers and verifiers and a statement of the verification processes used is agreed by the Board of studies and is considered when a School is Audited by the Quality Enhancement Unit. All Schools provide students with details of the verification procedures.

Marked copies of assessments are kept for the External Examiner, who will make a judgement on the appropriateness of marking practices, which they will report at External Examination Boards and in the written report that is submitted to the Quality Enhancement Unit, and which must be addressed by the school in its planning for the next academic year.

The University uses Assessment Reports on the Quality of University Examinations (ARQUE) summaries as an additional mechanism to compare the marks awarded in different modules within and between years, and to compare the marks students achieve on each module with their performance in other modules. The system, which is maintained by Quality Enhancement Unit staff is primarily used to identify outlying modules at School Boards of Examiners' Meetings, but also identifies potential differences in student performance by gender. The use of ARQUE is routinely praised by External Examiners, who report that it supports transparent and constructive discussions on marks across modules and assures them that marking is consistent and non-discriminatory.

### 3.2. External expertise

External expertise is utilized in the initial approval and validation of a degree programme and in annual quality assurance through the external examining process. Initial programme approval considers the assessment strategy in depth, using internal and external subject expertise in all cases. It ensures that teaching and assessment methods are aligned with sector-wide reference points such as [The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of Degree-Awarding Bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#), and discipline-specific [Subject Benchmark Statements](#). Programmes conferring professional recognition or Licence to Practise, such as Nursing or Social Work, must align with the standards of relevant [Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies \(PSRBs\)](#). In these cases, the University supports PSRBs' close involvement in validation panels and ongoing monitoring. The same procedure is used to approve programmes reviewed through the 5-6 year revalidation cycle.

In addition to approving examination questions and examining marked assessment, External Examiners are requested to provide an annual written report, and oral comments, to the Board of Examiners. The report provides assurance that the standards of assessment and student performance are comparable with the standards of comparable UK HEI courses and align with national frameworks. In the rare instances where External Examiners raise concerns, the Quality Enhancement Unit ensures that Schools address these in full and these cases and responses are considered by the University's central Teaching and Learning decision-making body.

External Examiners reports are addressed through the University's annual review process for all modules and programmes. These reviews are completed by module and programme leads and, in addition to External Examiner comments, must address comparative student performance as set out by the ARQUE data, and student feedback (from various sources including module evaluation) together with pedagogically informed self-reflection.

External Examiners are selected, approved and trained in accordance with QAA Guidance on External Expertise.

## 4. ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

The University Council must ascertain that the University meets all standards set out in the *Quality Assessment Framework for Wales*. The Council is tasked with approving annual quality statements, which include assuring that: "The standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately set and maintained". An annual Quality Assurance Report helps satisfy the Council that the University continues to meet national expectations and regulatory requirements for degree standards.

As set out in the University's Charter, Senate is the "academic authority" of the University, responsible for "academic work". Senate is the ruling body on academic (but not managerial) matters and is responsible for all academic issues affecting the University.

The University Teaching and Learning Strategy Group is delegated by Senate to oversee the implementation of the Quality Assurance mechanisms set out above and considers issues relating to degree outcomes, student performance and degree classifications arising from ongoing internal and external review.

School Boards of Studies and Award Boards (that are sub-groups of Boards of Studies) are responsible for the quality of their awards and are subject to University regulations. Award Boards are attended by Quality Assurance officers in the year prior to Internal Quality Audits to verify that practices are being followed and External Examiners are also required to confirm that these Boards follow University regulations.

The Quality Enhancement Group, which is a sub-group of The University Teaching and Learning Strategy Group, considers annual Programme Level reviews. This group, chaired by the PVC for L&T, including College Directors of Teaching and Learning and Quality Assurance representation, reflects on issues raised, best practice, trends across the University, enhancement opportunities and training needs.



All taught programmes are revalidated on a cyclical 5-6 year basis, usually as part of a school-wide validation of taught programmes. Concerns regarding the quality of teaching and assessment may trigger a validation outside the usual cycle.

## 5. DEGREE CLASSIFICATION ALGORITHM

The University uses a single algorithm to determine degree classifications for Bachelor's (Honours) Degrees. The calculation involves adding the overall percentage for year two modules to the overall percentage for year three modules with year the second average having double weighting:  $[L5 + (L6 \times 2)]$ . For extended undergraduate degrees, the algorithm is  $[(0.4 \times L6) + (0.6 \times L7)]$ , however, if approved at validation the year two (L5) modules may also be included as follows:  $[L5 + (2 \times L6) + (3 \times L7)]/6$ .

The Bachelor's algorithm has not been modified since the University received independent awarding powers in 2007, but it is subject to periodic review. One such review was undertaken in 19/20 in the context of the UKSCQA *Principles of Effective Degree Algorithm Design*, and concluded that the University is in line with these principles.

## 6. TEACHING AND LEARNING

In the summer of 2020 six **turn-round projects** were mobilised to ensure a robust Institutional response in the context of the pandemic for the academic year 2020/21, with a dynamic approach taken to our delivery to meet two key educational aims:

1. To facilitate a return to campus-, work- and field-based teaching and learning and to maximize delivery of these in-person activities.
2. To ensure that delivery methods used by schools afforded the achievement of the following educational attributes, which are at the centre of the University's 2030 Teaching and Learning Strategy:  
<https://www.bangor.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-11/strategy2030-teaching-and-learning-strategy.pdf>

- Challenge,
- Inquiry,
- Application,
- Collaboration,
- Self-direction.

Importantly the approach taken by academic staff in designing their teaching took in account of the following principles:

1. Decisions taken about teaching within modules were considered in terms of how they fit within relevant programmes.
2. That on campus-, work- and field-based learning provide significant value and were encouraged across the programme as appropriate. It was acknowledged this was not relevant for distance-learning programmes, which have their unique delivery approaches.
3. Teaching activities were designed to help develop connectivity and social interaction through learning.

In practical terms, across the academic year at Bangor University for 2021-22 most programmes utilised a balance of the four types of delivery described below. The specific nature of 1 to 4 naturally varied by subject area and not only depended on factors such as social distancing, our building capacity, professional/

accreditation requirements, but also the interaction of factors such as infection control regimes (e.g., cleaning of rooms), building capacity and timetable parameters.

Staff considered the dynamic approach and associated experience at a programme level and across the academic year rather than in single modules or points in time. In addition, it is valuable to think in terms of learning hours, not contact hours, and to consider the variety of teaching and learning activities that a student undertook. Note also that the term 'face-to-face' is not used below, as teaching can be 'face-to-face' via online means (e.g., a tutorial or supervision meeting held via Teams).

### **Types of delivery**

#### **1. In-person (synchronous) live**

Available to students on-campus at Bangor University.

Typically included:

- a. Lectures (where room capacity permits)
- b. Small group seminars/tutorials
- c. Workshops
- d. Practicals
- e. Field-work
- f. Open door drop-in sessions
- g. Work-based learning

#### **2. Synchronous online**

Available to students at Bangor University and those not able to be on campus due to Covid-19.

Typically include:

- a. Lectures/Seminars/tutorials/workshops/demonstrations/etc via appropriate software
- b. Drop-in sessions/office hours/one-to-one meetings via appropriate software
- c. Live discussion forums

#### **3. Hybrid synchronous**

Synchronous sessions that are simultaneously delivered to in-person and online groups.

Typically include:

- a. Lectures/Seminars/tutorials/workshops/demonstrations/etc via appropriate software
- b. Live discussion forums

#### **4. Asynchronous online**

Available to students at Bangor University and those not able to be on campus due to Covid-19.

May typically include:

- a. Recorded lectures/demonstrations, resources, etc available on Blackboard
- b. Blackboard announcements and email updates
- c. Discussions through online forums

In addition to the above, students also engage in the usual guided- and self-directed learning (e.g., formative assessment, reading, revising, assessment preparation and completion).

The Head of Quality Enhancement chaired one of the **turn-round projects**, with a focus on central oversight to changes proposed by the Academic Schools in their teaching and assessment in line with the above delivery in the context of the pandemic. These plans were considered at a University wide forum (the Programme Approval Group) in September 2020, with confirmation that all programme learning outcomes for all the University's Bangor-based programmes and its embedded programmes could be met for the class graduating in 2021. Parallel process for collaborative provision were followed through Partnership Management Boards or equivalent bodies. This robust planning process enabled the University to maintain its exemplary QA processes.

During 2020/21 a period of rapid expansion in academic driven enhancement activity occurred through eight **Teaching and Learning Scaffold Projects** that support the embedding of the 2030 Teaching and Learning Strategy. The University's Centre for Enhancement in Learning and Teaching (CELT) was a focus for this enhancement and support through:

- ongoing Continual Professional Development for academic staff across the University.
- supporting staff in achieving formal qualifications in higher education teaching via the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education and HEA Fellowship Scheme.
- development of our module evaluation scheme.

Bangor has been at the forefront of embedding the principle of co-production within curriculum design, validation and review. In addition, the University takes an evidence and data-led approach to decisions around curriculum design and review, utilizing a range of qualitative and quantitative datasets.

The University has adopted the use of lecture capture software as a tool to support student learning and has developed a 'Panopto Policy' to provide a guiding framework for its use. In addition, the University has continued to invest in teaching facilities (including laboratory and performance facilities), library services, social learning facilities and learning technology.

The University provides a wide range of student support services and has developed its Request Centre system to enhance the management of student requests for support with their studies.

## 7. ACTIONS

The following actions arising from the 2020/21 Degree Outcomes Statement are currently in progress:

- a) Reviewing of Degree Outcomes Statement by the University's Teaching and Learning Strategy Group.
- b) Dissemination of subject-level degree award data for our students by demographic characteristics to schools and creation of degree award action plans by Schools.
- c) Monitoring of degree award action plans by College DTLs.