

## Norwich University of the Arts Degree Outcomes Statement

Norwich University of the Arts is a specialist university in arts, design, architecture and media with a strong portfolio of courses. There are around 2,800 students of which 95% are undergraduate. Our courses are practice-based creative courses and are offered full-time. Over the last few years NUA's undergraduate students have received an average of 72 - 75% 1<sup>st</sup>/2:1 awards, which is slightly below sector results for art and design subjects.

### 1. Institutional degree classification profile

Achievement by classification % 2017 - 2022							
Academic Year	1	2.1	2.2	3	ORD	DIP HE	Total
2017/18	33.8%	36.4%	19.6%	5.9%	1.8%	2.5%	100%
2018/19	24.6%	45.2%	20.4%	7.3%	1.0%	1.6%	100%
2019/20	26.6%	43.9%	22.9%	4.4%	0.7%	1.6%	100%
2020/21	32.4%	40.0%	20.1%	3.9%	0.4%	3.1%	100%
2021/22	35.3%	40.0%	19.0%	2.0%	1.1%	2.6%	100%

The University has been monitoring the degree outcomes of its student body as part of its annual monitoring of the quality of its courses since its inception as a higher education provider. Regular monitoring includes the analysis of degree outcomes for different groups of students, including those with protected characteristics and from widening participation backgrounds. A summary of this analysis is presented below, and further information is available in our [Access & Participation Plan](#).

#### Percentage of students receiving a 1<sup>st</sup> class or upper second class (2.1) degree classification

The proportion of first class and upper second class degrees (1/2.1) has increased since 2017/18 but remains below sector results for creative art and design subjects. Chart 1 shows the Norwich results compared to sector results for 2017-18 to 2020-21 (most recent year available for benchmarking).

There was a wider diversion in 2019/20 which was the year in which the first Covid-19 pandemic lockdown was implemented. The University introduced emergency assessment regulations to ensure that the impact of the lockdown was mitigated for all students including finalists. The outcomes for NUA in 2019-20 were consistent with previous years however there has been a shift towards more first-class degrees in 2020-21 and 2021-22. This is a direct result of the application of extenuating circumstances for all student impacted by Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns which occurred in 2020 and 2021. The University normally considers upgrades within 1% of the borderline of a higher classifications. The University regulations allow for an increased borderline of 2% for students with extenuating circumstances. Extenuating circumstances were given to all students who were impacted by Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns which restricted their access to practical facilities and workshops. The application of the extenuating circumstance regulations resulted in a slightly higher proportion of students becoming eligible for upgrades in 2020-21 and 2021-22. See section 4 for more details.

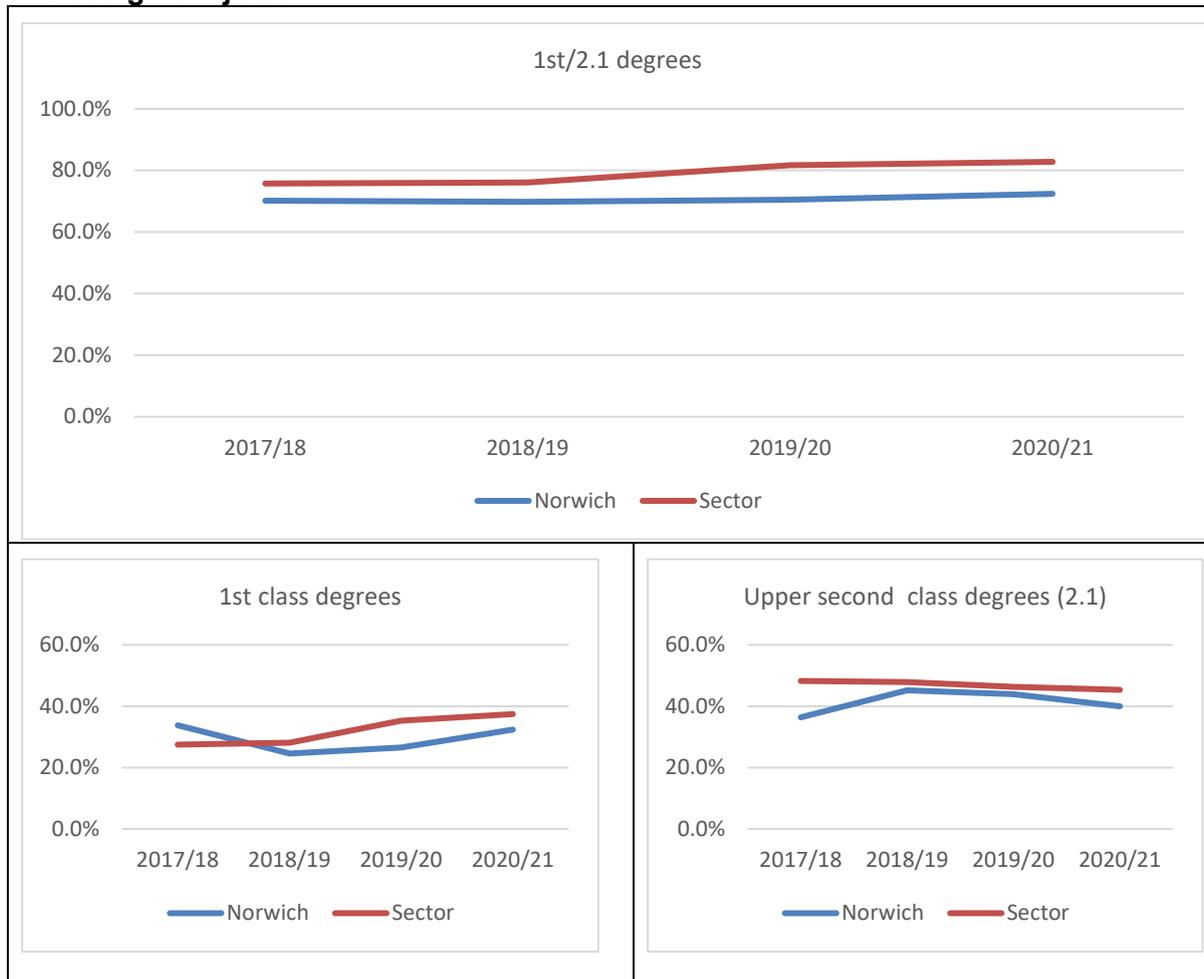
We do note the impact of the borderline regulations adopted as part of our Covid-19 mitigation and we have noted the UUK/GuildHE statement on returning to pre-pandemic levels of firsts and 2.1s by 2023. We are committed to returning to our normal pre-pandemic

regulations as they relate to the treatment of borderline upgrades.

However, it is important to note that degree outcomes are a product of a range of factors, and we can attribute much of our improvements to a combination of an increase in attainment levels of our intake over this period, advances in innovative teaching and learning strategies and continuing professional development of our staff. The University offers an AdvanceHE HEA accredited Professional Recognition Scheme and PGCertHE in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

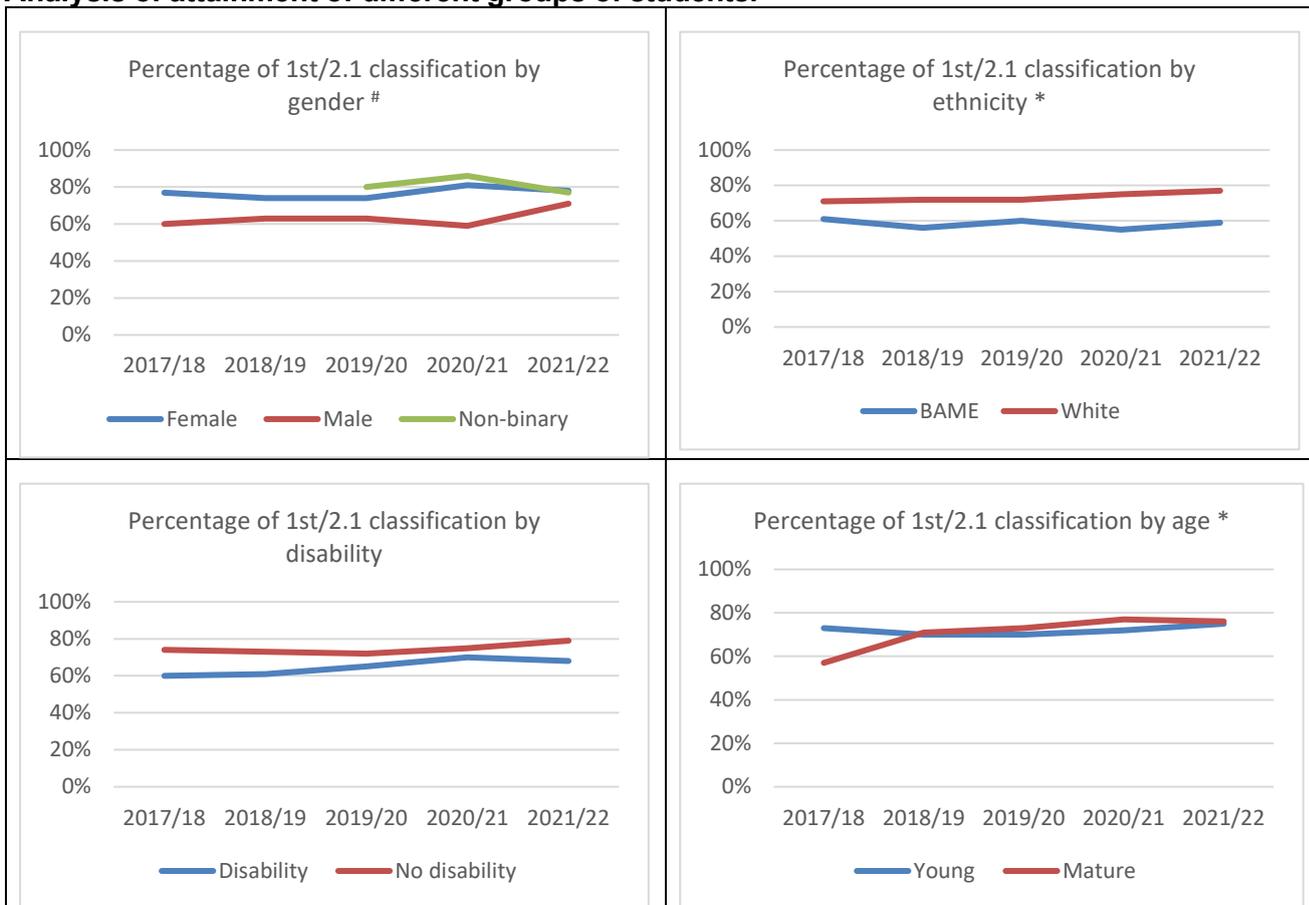
We are also committed to reducing the gaps in attainment between different groups of students through interventions in the learning, teaching and support for targeted groups and this will also have a positive impact on levels of attainment in the next few years.

**Chart 1: Benchmarking Norwich University of the Arts against sector results for art and design subjects**



Source: NUA results - Student Records system/benchmarking data from HEIDI

**Analysis of attainment of different groups of students.**



Source: Student records system

# Number of students who do not identify as female or male in the graduating cohorts is less than 10 therefore percentage measures are not reportable for years 2017/18 and 2018/19.

\* Absolute numbers in the populations of “mature” and “BAME” within the graduating cohorts are small (< 50) and percentage measures may give disproportionate results when compared with the larger comparison population.

The charts above indicate the gaps in achievement of degree classifications of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2.1 for different groups of students. These variations in levels of achievement are kept under constant review and targets and measures to address these gaps in attainment are outlined in our [Access and Participation Plan 2020-2025](#).

**2. Assessment and marking practices**

In defining and managing academic standards, the University works within its regulatory framework which is based on established external reference points (the UK Quality Code, including the Framework for HE Qualifications and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements)

NUA’s regulatory framework consists of:

- The *NUA Award and Credit Scheme* which includes FHEQ mapping
- The *Student Regulations and Procedures*
- The *Quality Management and Enhancement (QME) Handbook*
- *Unit Outlines and Handbooks*

The University employs a range of processes to ensure standards; students are assessed against clearly defined unit learning outcomes, with standards articulated through grading matrices; internal moderation and cross-course internal verification ensure that standards are consistent across all provision. All marks are ratified through assessment and awards boards and Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee monitors assessment outcomes.

### **External Expertise**

The University utilises the QAA's guidance to review and evaluate its processes and procedures and continues to map its practice against this guidance including the advice on External Expertise.

All courses have at least one external examiner appointed through a rigorous scrutiny process. The University continues to apply the UK-wide set of criteria for appointing external examiners <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/external-examining-arrangements-review.aspx>. For External Examiners who do not have previous experience of external examining, the University appoints an external mentor to supplement its internal training. All new examiners receive a formal induction from the Quality Manager and all ongoing external examiners receive annual briefings throughout their term of appointment. Comments from external examiners on our induction include "whole briefing process has been excellent, comprehensive and well appreciated". "The Deans briefing at the beginning of the visit and meeting of all external examiners at the end of the visit is commendable".

All external examiners attend finalist assessment boards and a Lead External Examiner is appointed to meet with all external examiners to identify common themes or issues arising from the examination process for reporting to the University. The Lead External Examiner is a member of the Final Award Board and approves all UG awards.

External scrutiny is also provided through the appointment of academics and practitioners working in related fields to periodic review and approval panels as detailed in our [QME Handbook](#).

### **Assessment**

- Standards are upheld across all Units of the award by ensuring that all learning outcomes on every unit are met. All credit counts towards the final degree, assessment at all levels are subject to internal and external scrutiny as detailed in our [Student Regulations and Procedures](#) and [QME Handbook](#) and Assessment Guide.
- Assessment requirements and learning outcomes reflect the FHEQ and relevant subject benchmark(s). They are informed by contemporary practice and theory in the disciplines and are subject to regular review by the University.
- Centrally run appeals and extenuating circumstances processes ensure consistency of the student experience.
- Marking criteria articulate the expected academic standards for each learning outcome at each level of performance and are used to enhance the transparency of learning outcomes and assessment practices.
- Academic staff engage in subject communities, acting as external examiners, undertaking research and scholarship, engaging in professional practice and are supported in attaining fellowship at all levels from Advance HE.
- Learning, Teaching & Quality Committee and Internal Verification Processes play a key role in the monitoring of overarching academic standards across awards and classifications

- The academic standards achieved in each discipline are compared and verified at the final assessment point at each level of study (Undergraduate Level 6; and MA Project) through two mechanisms:
  - i. Internal verification: following final assessment by course teams, staff from other disciplines consider samples of students' work, together with provisional marks or grades. Any issues identified are considered by the relevant Dean and Course Leader and this may result in the reassessment of student work.
  - ii. External examination: Following internal verification, samples of students' work, together with provisional marks or grades, are considered by external examiners.

Following this, provisional marks or grades are reported at the relevant Assessment and Award Boards, where results are confirmed.

In 2019-20 following the UK-wide Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, the University made an amendment to one of its assessment requirements for final year students to allow students to complete their unit without requiring access to studios and workshops which was proscribed under the lockdown provisions. The amendment changed the "body of resolved practice" to a "body of developing practice" with students providing additional evidence to show how their work would have reached resolution had the lockdown not happened.

### **3. Academic governance**

Academic Governance plays a pivotal role in protecting the value of our qualifications over time. Academic Board has devolved responsibility for the academic leadership of the University including matters related to assessment, regulations and procedures, quality and academic standards and the development of academic activities and the resources needed to support them.

Academic Board has overall responsibility for the conduct of assessment. At course level, the security of assessment procedures is the responsibility of the Dean of Creative Educations, who oversees Programme Directors, Course Leaders and academic staff. The security of central assessment procedures is the responsibility of the Academic Registrar. Academic Board receives an analysis of Award Profiles at its October meeting.

The University's Council has devolved responsibility for academic governance to Academic Board as set out in the Articles of Government. Academic Board reports regularly to Council and Council receives the full set of minutes as part of the Vice-Chancellors report to Council. Reports from key quality monitoring processes (including appeals, Award Profiles) are submitted to Council or its Audit Committee.

The University's Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (LTQC) monitors attainment of target groups to compare data and seeks to identify trends or anomalies arising from assessment, by course, terms, level or other sub-category. In case of such a trend being identified, LTQC will take measures to investigate and intervene.

The University does not have any partnership arrangements at Undergraduate Level.

### **4. Classification algorithms**

Until 2019-20 the degree algorithm used for all undergraduate courses was based on a final award mark calculated as 25% of the weighted average of Year 2 credits, and 75% of the weighted average of Year 3 credits. Where students enter directly into Year 3 the final award

mark is calculated using 100% of Year 3 credits.

In 2019-20, the University introduced a variance to its regulations that allowed students to be classified on the best of the two-year algorithm (25%/75%) or final year only (0%/100%). This was in response to the disruption caused by Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns and was intended to minimise the impact by offering a best of two calculations. Having reviewed the operation of this algorithm we are intending to maintain the option of applying a best of calculation based on the two algorithms as this applies a more inclusive algorithm that takes into account a range of learning styles and different progression trajectories of individual students.

Classifications are conferred by an Award Board and the Lead External Examiner is present to ensure that the University follows its regulations. Individuals and their classifications are not up for debate at the Award Board, the Board is used to ensure the right credits have been achieved for the named award and the credit has been accumulated in accordance with our regulations. The University does not allow any condonement or compensation within its regulations, all year 2 and all year 3 credits are included in the calculation.

We calculate the final award mark to 2 decimal places and then round it to the nearest whole number; the degree classification is determined as follows:

70-100%	First Class Honours, or "a First"
60-69%	Second Class Honours (Upper), or "a 2.1"
50-59%	Second Class Honours (Lower), or "a 2.2"
40-49%	Third Class Honours, or "a Third"
0-39%	No degree award or classification; exit award only (if appropriate)

### **Borderline marks**

The Final Award Board may adjust a degree classification if the final award mark within 1% of the borderline range; these are 69.00 – 69.99%; 59.00 – 59.99%; 49.00 – 49.99%.

The Final Award Board decides whether to give an automatic upgrade or a discretionary upgrade to the higher degree classification. Automatic upgrades to the higher classification are given when the borderline mark is within 0.5% of the higher classification. A Discretionary upgrade to the higher classification are given when the final award mark is within 1% of the higher classification and the final unit mark is in the higher classification.

### **Extenuating Circumstances and borderline marks**

The Final Award Board may also give a discretionary upgrade where the final award mark falls within the 2% borderline range and extenuating circumstances which are considered to be extreme are upheld.

In 2019-20, following the UK-wide Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, the University treated the pandemic as extreme extenuating circumstances for all students and applied the 2% borderline in all cases.

From 2022-23 the normal borderline regulations will be resumed.

### **Resubmission**

Student Regulations and Procedures normally allow a maximum of two opportunities, unless there are extenuating circumstances or additional opportunities are granted as a result of a

successful appeal.

### **Teaching practices and learning resources**

The University is strongly committed to supporting student learning and teaching and continues to enhance its teaching practices and learning resources to ensure successful progression and achievement of students. Our learning and teaching is informed by staff engagement with creative practice, research and knowledge exchange.

### **Development of Academic Staff**

We support learning and teaching through developing the teaching practices of our staff. All new staff without a teaching qualification are contracted to undertake a qualification or equivalent CPD to attain AdvanceHE Higher Education Academy recognition through the UK Professional Standards Framework. In 2015 NUA developed its own specialist PG Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and a CPD route to recognition, the NUA Professional Recognition Scheme (PRS), accredited by the AdvanceHE HEA.

The introduction of this scheme has impacted significantly on teaching quality and is a contributory factor in the improvement in attainment at NUA. A fundamental aspect of the Professional Recognition process is the quality of professional reflection within submissions at all levels and in many cases, live interventions into teaching and learning that have a real and measurable impact on the student experience.

The Fellowship scheme continues to enable us to achieve excellence in learning, teaching and the wider student experience and to give our students the best possible preparation for their future lives and careers. Engagement with the scheme has brought greater rigour and consistency to teaching practice and has supported early career, and more experienced academics to engage in the process of supported reflection to give students a better, and more informed experience of teaching and learning.

Engagement with the Scheme has also informed enhancements to the NUA curriculum. In particular, projects undertaken by staff as part of the PG Cert HE in relation to PGT study and assessment and feedback have served to inform University-wide reconsideration of Learning Outcomes and how these relate to the different demands of transparency for students and compliance with the FHEQ.

### **On-line Assessment Feedback**

The University's on-line assessment feedback system is an example of a project identified through the annual monitoring process as good practice which was further developed to enhance the student experience. In 2011 NUA gained funding for 'e-engage', a JISC Learning and Teaching Innovation project to improve the consistency of feedback to students using assistive technologies. This fed into a NUA Online Assessment Feedback project in 2012-13, funded through the NUA Learning and Teaching Fund<sup>1</sup> and led to a pilot project on BA Graphics to develop on-line feedback for assessment. This web based on-line assessment

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<sup>1</sup> The Learning and Teaching Fund is a resource managed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and provides funding for the development and delivery of action research projects that deliver measurable enhancements to the student experience.

feedback system, which allows marks and feedback to be entered online and retrieved by the student once published, was rolled out across all undergraduate courses in 2012-13. The system provides students with a permanent, cumulative record of assessment feedback which can be viewed or printed via an online portal.

### **Learning resources and student support**

Over the past 5 years the University has increased its investment in student-facing technical facilities, Student Support, Library, and Learning Support services to support individual learners. The Student Support team provide drop-in sessions and targeted mental health, welfare and disability support. The University has also increased the number of staff who are able to support employability, career planning, literacy, study skills and dedicated dyslexia support and has enhanced the library website and online resources available to students.

The University has a well-established PAL mentoring scheme which plays an additional role in helping to support learners through the assessment process. This mentoring scheme has been in place since 2003 and has developed through engagement with external agencies and in-house CPD training.

## **5. Identifying good practice and actions**

The Award and Credit Scheme enables us to benchmark achievement between courses and the work undertaken by the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee has facilitated a greater understanding of differences in assessment outcomes by Course through exploration of unexpected variances with Course Leaders.

The Internal Verification undertaken annually is an academic peer-review of student submissions, assessment processes and accompanying marks across courses. The process of Internal Verification is additional and supplementary to routine assessment and monitoring processes. The University's assessment and Internal Verification processes take into account the Degree Classification Statement of Intent developed by UKSCQA, GuildHE, QAA and Universities UK. The IV process takes the Statement of Intent and its guiding principles regarding transparency, reliability and fairness in the awarding of degrees.

Specifically, the Internal Verification process at NUA addresses three of the four commitments related to the review of assessment:

- Ensure assessments continue to stretch and challenge students;
- Review and explain how final degree classifications are calculated;
- Review and publish data and analysis on students' degree outcomes.

Good practice identified by external examiners or through the course annual monitoring process is recognised by Academic Board and shared via the University's intranet and through staff development mechanism such as University Development Day.

## **6. Risks and challenges.**

One of the key challenges for the University is addressing the gaps in attainment between different groups of students. We will continue to monitor these and take action designed to reduce these, as outlined in our Access and Participation Plan. This plan captures the attainment gaps, successful actions, and key challenges, and sets out a series of targets to be met over the next 5-year period. As part of this we will continue to identify measures that demonstrate how anticipated enhancements to the curriculum, teaching practice, learning support, and investment lead to increased attainment.

One of the key external variables for which we have no control is on the levels of arts subjects in the school curriculum which will impact on the preparedness and levels of prior attainment that our new entrants will have in the future. We have recently reviewed our Year 0 curriculum to ensure that those with creative talent are given the opportunity to gain fundamental skills and visual thinking skills and that no student is disadvantaged because of the reduction of available creative options in the school curriculum.