



Degree Outcomes Statement 2020

1. Introduction

In September 2019, the ARU Senate¹ received a detailed report which concluded our internal institutional-level review of our approach to the classification of honours degrees.

The review provided assurance of the security, rigour and appropriateness of our approach and confirmed that ARU is meeting the expectations of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)'s Quality Code, and the Office for Students' (OfS) on-going conditions of registration (B4 and B5) that relate to protecting the value of qualifications.

The full detailed outcomes of the review were shared with external examiners appointed to our institutional Awards Board which has delegated authority on behalf of the Senate to confer ARU awards.

2. Executive Summary

As an institution ARU is proud of our work to ensure that all students, and especially those with challenging prior learning experiences and students with disabilities, can reach their full potential at ARU. We invest significant time and funds to ensure that we offer an exceptionally supportive educational environment for our students. Our academic and professional services staff are fully committed to ensuring that we offer our students a truly transformative education. We are therefore proud of the significant improvement in the outcomes of students from underrepresented groups, as evidenced in our Access and Participation Plan.

¹ ARU's most senior authority with responsibility for the setting and maintenance of academic standards and the quality of education

ARU has made outstanding contributions to the national picture by already eliminating the gaps entirely in two of the four areas identified by the OfS as national priorities and outperforming the sector in the other two:

- In 2018-19, 10% more students from areas with the lowest participation in higher education (POLAR4 quintile 1&2) chose to start at ARU compared to the sector;
- ARU has closed the gap in non-continuation between the most and the least represented groups. Polar4 quintile 1 students, from areas with the lowest participation rate in higher education, have outperformed quintile 5 students from areas with highest participation in HE in terms of continuation rates for the past 2 years;
- ARU has closed the gap in degree outcomes between disabled and non-disabled students; non-disabled students outperformed their disabled peers by only 0.4 % in 2018-19 compared to a gap of 2.4% for the sector. Disabled students have shown significant improvement since 2014-15 (+ 11%) and above sector performance since 2017-18;
- The sector gap in degree outcomes between white and black students is 22.1%; ARU has narrowed the gap to 11% over 5 years of continuous improvement;
- Over the last 5 years, black students at ARU have all but closed the gap when it comes to winning a graduate level position or moving into further study.

We achieved these outstanding improvements for our students through focused, strategic work on institution-wide education enhancements. These enhancements also resulted in improvements in degree outcomes for all our students.

3. Strategic Approach

All three of our education strategies since 2011 evidence a strong commitment to: active inclusive curriculum design and learning, teaching and assessment methods, the integration of employability and sustainability into the curriculum, involving students in research, developing students' learning literacies, and providing an outstanding educational infrastructure which enables students to learn whether on or off campus, recognising co- and extracurricular learning. All strategies also include a commitment to recognising and rewarding teaching by supporting academic staff to undertake the development they need,

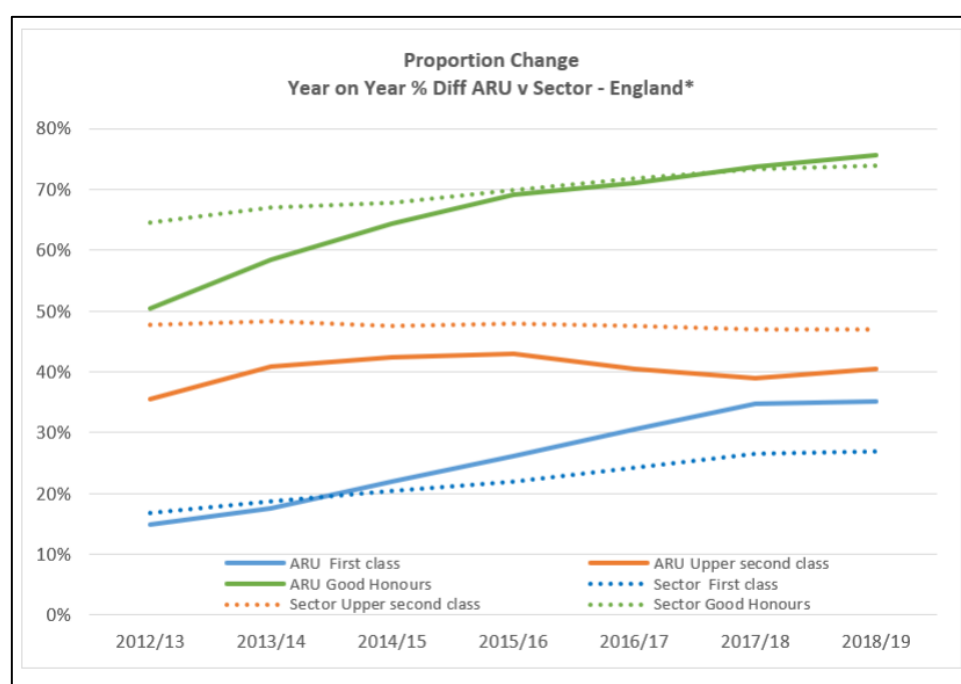
including engagement in pedagogic research and achievement of HEA fellowship and National Teaching Fellowship.

4. ARU's Classification Profile

Analysis of ARU's performance over time shows that in 2012/13 the proportion of good honours awarded by ARU was 14.2% below sector average. However, with the improvements made we are now just above the sector average.

The focused and targeted educational enhancement activities, and investment in resources have resulted in increasing the proportion of first class degrees awarded by ARU above the sector average, whereas the number upper second class degrees has remained more consistent since 2013/14.

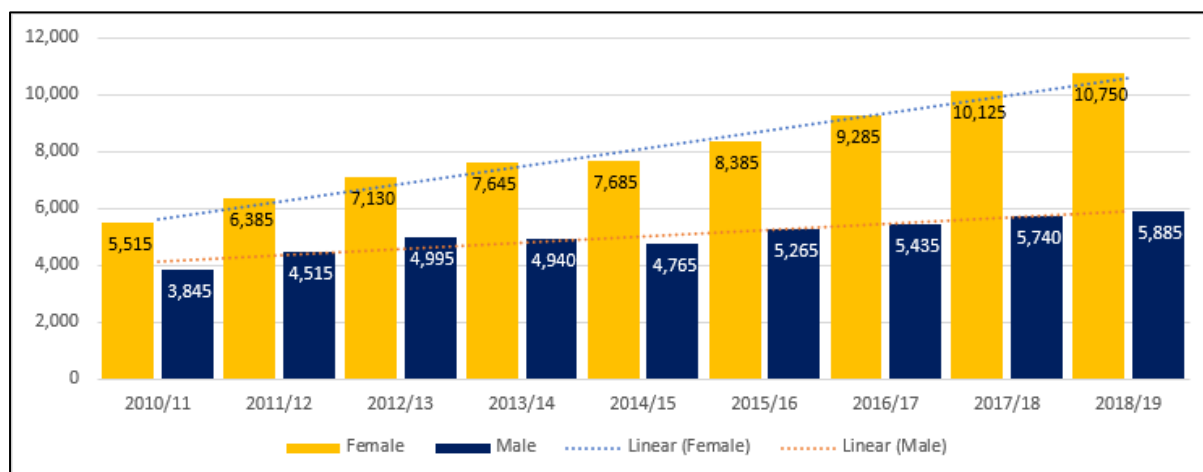
Degree Classification	% Degree Classification (1st, 2:1 & Good Honours)						
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
ARU First class	14.9%	17.5%	22.0%	26.1%	30.6%	34.8%	35.1%
ARU Upper second class	35.4%	40.9%	42.4%	42.9%	40.5%	39.0%	40.4%
ARU Good Honours	50.3%	58.4%	64.4%	69.1%	71.1%	73.8%	75.5%
Sector First class	16.8%	18.6%	20.3%	22.0%	24.3%	26.5%	26.9%
Sector Upper second class	47.6%	48.3%	47.5%	48.0%	47.5%	46.9%	47.0%
Sector Good Honours	64.5%	66.9%	67.8%	69.9%	71.8%	73.4%	73.9%



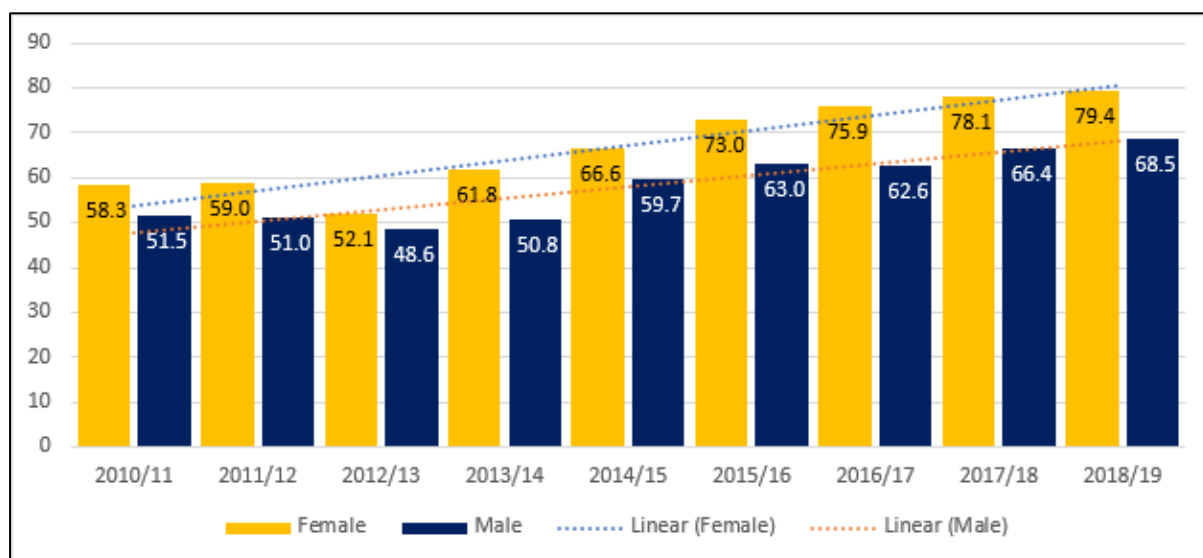
Gender

Anglia Ruskin has a higher proportion of female students who have historically performed better than their male counterparts. The proportion of female students has continued to increase, as has their performance. This therefore contributes to Anglia Ruskin's degree classification performance in recent years, as illustrated below.

Student Numbers by Gender, Full-time, First Degree



Good Honours by Gender, Full-time, First Degree

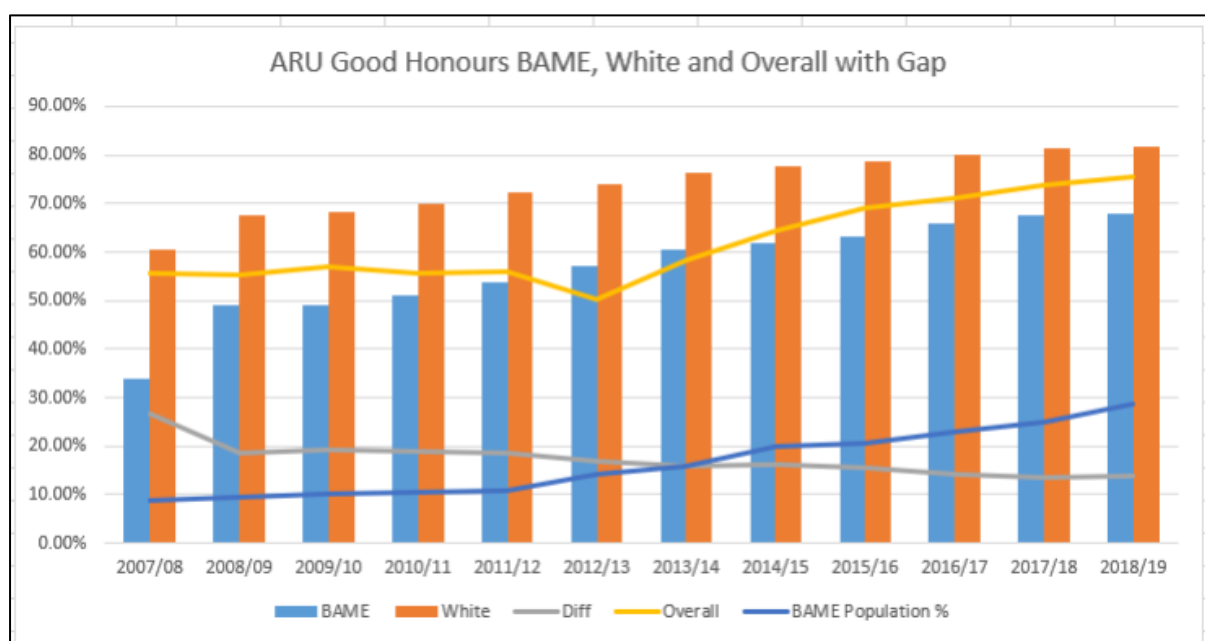


Ethnicity

The analysis below shows good honours performance by ethnicity, and categorised as BAME and White. As a result of our focus on inclusive assessment practice, Anglia Ruskin's BAME/White attainment gap has halved in ten years. Since 2013/14, ARU has reduced the

BAME attainment gap by 9% points and is in line with sector performance (13.2%). Over the same period the BAME population proportion has more than doubled from 9% in 2007/08 to over 25% in 2018/19.

Improvements in award of first class degrees for BAME students, and BAME growth, accounts for 3% of our overall improvements in good honours.



5. Academic Regulations

ARU's *Academic Regulations* (www.aru.ac.uk/academicregs) are published publicly and provide full details of the algorithms used for the purposes of classifying ARU's awards.

The principles underpinning our approach include:

- the use of a credit-weighted arithmetic mean to aggregate performance across 75% of the eligible modules
- the consideration of exit velocity which allows classifications to appropriately reflect the ability and performance of students in the concluding stages of their course (e.g.: weighted towards level 6), recognising the academic journey students have undertaken and the progressive increasing level of difficulty of study;

- the substitution of the lowest performing 15 credits (maximum) at level 6 if a better performing 15 credits not already used in the algorithm are available elsewhere in the student's academic profile at level 5;
- the default application of a second algorithm – only for students who fall into defined borderline categories under the first algorithm – which is based on the principle of preponderance. Primarily, the second algorithm is designed to provide re-assurance to students of the robustness and fairness of our approach to award classification as the second algorithm rarely leads to an elevated outcome but, in the vast majority of cases, supports the outcome of the first algorithm. In order to ensure consistency and fairness, colleagues are not permitted to exercise discretion at borderline cases;
- a regulated maximum volume of opportunities to retake modules where students have failed to achieve a pass mark.

ARU revised the algorithm for the classification of honours degrees in 2014 and again in 2016. The first change introduced in 2014 was designed to align with practice elsewhere in the sector by allowing the poorest performing 15 credits at level 6 not to be included in the classification algorithm if there was a better performing 15 credits available at level 5. In summary, the 180 credits used to classify the award now requires a minimum of 105 credits to be from level 6 whereas previously the minimum was 120 credits from level 6.

A second, smaller change was made to the process in 2016 when a second algorithm was introduced for students who fell into defined borderline cases under the first algorithm. The purpose of this change was to consider “borderline performances” under a second methodology, if only to provide reassurance on the outcome of the first algorithm. The newer second algorithm is based on the principle of preponderance with 120 credits all required to be in the classification being sought of which a minimum of 90 must be from level 6 (as an indication of exit velocity).

The tables below detail the relevant data for current performance, as well as what performance would have been with the impact of the algorithm changes removed:

ARU actual	% Degree Classifications - ARU					
Degree Classification	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
First class honours	14.9%	17.5%	22.0%	26.1%	30.6%	34.8%
Upper second class honours	35.4%	40.9%	42.3%	43.0%	40.5%	39.0%
Good honours	50.3%	58.4%	64.3%	69.1%	71.0%	73.8%
Lower second class honours	28.8%	30.8%	26.1%	24.0%	21.8%	20.1%
Third class honours/Pass	18.3%	10.8%	9.1%	6.5%	6.9%	5.9%

ARU with algorithm change removed	% Degree Classifications - ARU					
Degree Classification	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
First class honours	14.9%	17.5%	20.7%	24.6%	29.0%	33.3%
Upper second class honours	35.4%	40.9%	41.7%	42.8%	40.1%	38.8%
Good honours	50.3%	58.4%	62.4%	67.4%	69.1%	72.1%
Lower second class honours	28.8%	30.8%	27.5%	25.4%	23.4%	21.4%
Third class honours/Pass	18.3%	10.8%	9.6%	6.8%	7.2%	6.4%

As part of our internal review, we have evaluated all students who graduated since the introduction of these revisions to determine outcomes had the classification algorithm changes not been made. The first (2014) change has seen **568 students (2.79%) of 20,347** degrees conferred (not just those reported to HESA) achieve a higher classification in the four years since its introduction. The second (2016) change has seen **22 students (0.11%)** achieve a higher classification in the first two years since its introduction.

6. Quality Assurance

Sector reference points such as QAA's Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, Subject Benchmark Statements and Quality Code, together with the expectations of Professional, Statutory & Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) underpin our regulatory framework and quality assurance processes. We incorporated sector and other appropriate consideration into the design of the curriculum and assessment tasks through the Course (Re)Approval processes.

Like other UK universities, ARU employs a comprehensive external examining system which requires draft assessment tasks at level 5 and higher to be approved by external examiners prior to their publication to students and the sample moderation of students' assessed work as part of the marking process. We deliver an external examiner induction programme in May and November of each year to ensure our external examiners are appropriately informed and prepared for their role. The sessions are well attended and receive excellent feedback.

ARU's published [Generic Assessment Criteria and Marking Standards](#) provide students, academic staff and external examiners with a transparent and clearly articulated approach to the allocation of marks with reference to learning outcomes for each assessment task students undertake. They describe the different, non-subject specific, expectations of

performance that are typically expected to receive a mark in defined bands on a fine-graded (percentage) mark scheme. A separate set of criteria is published for each of the five levels of study (3-7) but which employs a consistent set of descriptors such as: “basic”, “satisfactory”, “good”, “excellent”, “outstanding” and “exceptional”. For each module, students are provided with either the institution’s [Generic Assessment Criteria and Marking Standards](#) or an adapted version of the criteria with specific reference to an individual task and which is based on, and aligns with, the generic criteria in terms of the consistent use of terminology and expectations. These criteria are used as the basis for the marking and internal moderation processes undertaken by academic staff and for the external moderation process undertaken by our external examiners.

ARU is represented by the Deputy Academic Registrar on AdvanceHE’s Project Board for the Degree Standards Project. ARU was an early adopter of the External Examiner Professional Development programme with the first training day held in November 2017. ARU has two staff fully trained to deliver the course (the Deputy Academic Registrar and the Institutional Academic Lead for Assessment). To date, 80 members of ARU staff have completed the training.

The ARU Awards Board exercises delegated responsibility on behalf of the Senate to confer ARU awards. As well as ensuring the correct application of the Academic Regulations, the Board provides oversight of performance with each meeting receiving statistical data on conferred awards. On behalf of the Board, the Academic Registrar prepares an annual report for the Senate on the activities of the Board which includes data on awards conferred, classifications and trend analysis.