



Degree Outcomes Statement: 2024

1. Introduction

Degree Outcomes Statements are part of a sector wide commitment to protect the value and ongoing credibility of Higher Education qualifications. This statement provides stakeholders with information about the way Keele University manages the academic standards of its awards and meets the Office for Students' ongoing conditions of registration (B4 and B5). The statement compares outcomes over the past five years.

2. The University's degree classification profile

Chart 1 and Table 1 outline the overall percentage of good degrees (1st class and 2.i) awarded to UK first-degree students between 2017-18 and 2022-23 by Keele, and sector-wide. The percentage of good degrees awarded by Keele to UK First Degree Students has remained within 2 percentage points of the sector average since 2017-18. At Keele, in common with the rest of the sector, the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on degree outcomes between 2019-20 and 2021-22. In 2019-20, the impact of COVID-19 mitigation measures led to a significant uptick in the sector average for good degrees awarded. Keele remained behind the sector in that year, increasing by only 2 percentage points on 2018-19, compared to the average sector increase of 5 percentage points. In 2020-21, good degrees awarded by Keele increased by four percentage points, remaining within two percentage points of the sector average. This increase is attributed to the impact of mitigations put in place to support students' attainment during the COVID-19 pandemic. In both 2021-22 and 2022-23 the percentage of Keele good degrees reduced by two percentage points each year, first to 81% and more recently to 79%, which is consistent with the previous averages prior to 2019-20. This indicates that the percentage of good degrees has returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Across this period there have been changes implemented in a number of areas that have aimed to improve student outcomes, including an enhancement in the effectiveness, timeliness and thoroughness of assessment and feedback achieved by redesign of assessments, better pre-submission support and more standardised electronic feedback. The current classification profile also reflects our efforts to enhance the attainment of students from historically lower achieving groups through measures set out in the University's Access and Participation Plan (APP).

Whilst the data in table 2 outlines some positive progress on reducing and in some cases, reversing, gaps linked to age, disability and ethnicity, further work is required to continue to improve equity of outcomes across our student body. The following key groups within attainment have been identified as priority areas of focus within our APP 2025-26 to 2028-29: IMD Q1, Ethnicity types of Black, Asian, Mixed and Other, and students with disability types of Mental Health or Multiple Impairments. We have also highlighted work with our Mature Students within both the continuation and completion lifecycle stage. The University is committed to targeting further improvements in success gaps as a part of its APP.

Chart 1 - Percentage of Good Degrees Awarded to UK First Degree Students in years 2017/18 – 2022/23¹

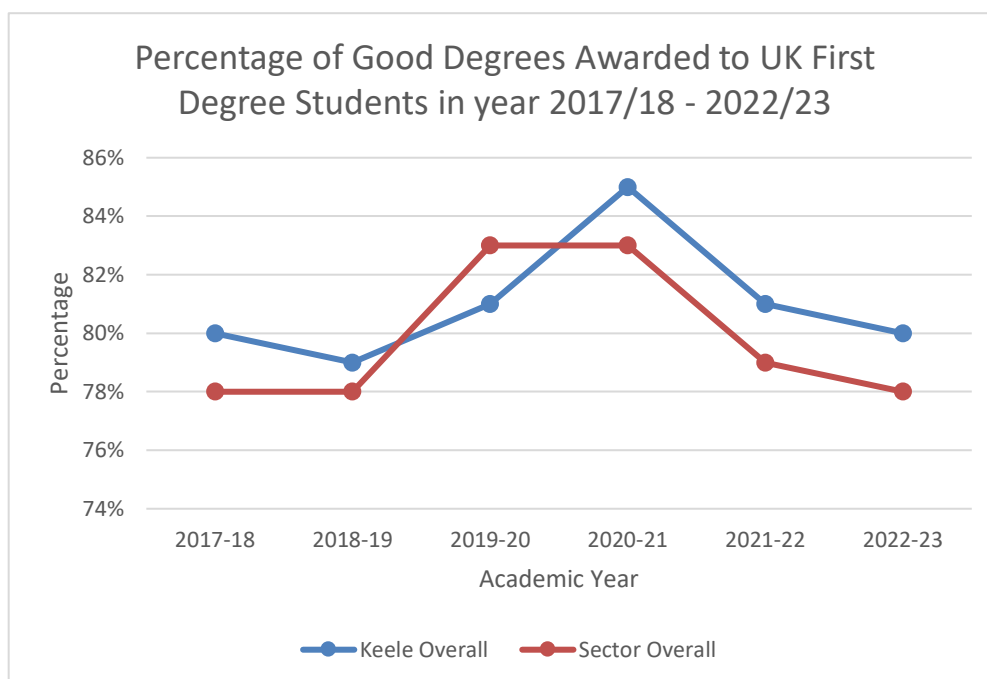


Table 1 - Percentage of Good Degrees Awarded to UK First Degree Students by Academic Year and Student Characteristic

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Keele Overall	80%	79%	81%	85%	81%	80%
<i>Sector Overall</i>	78%	78%	83%	83%	79%	78%
Sex						
Female	81%	80%	81%	87%	83%	82%
Male	79%	77%	81%	83%	78%	77%
Other sex	[no data]	[no data]	50%	[no data]	33%	67%
Age						
Mature (21 & over)	66%	72%	70%	73%	82%	85%
Young (under 21)	82%	80%	82%	86%	81%	79%
Disability						
Disability Reported	75%	76%	80%	84%	80%	81%
No Disability Reported	81%	80%	81%	85%	81%	79%
Ethnicity						
Asian	71%	73%	82%	85%	75%	73%
Black	67%	60%	75%	70%	67%	65%

¹ The data in this Chart 1 (above) and Table 1 (below) relates to UK domicile students only. Age split is based on age on entry. Medicine students are not included in the data as medical degrees are not classified. Data is taken from the Office for Student (OfS) [Access & Participation \(APP\) dataset](#) and from [OfS sector analysis of degree classifications](#). The OfS APP dashboard provides further analysis of these data if required, including breakdown by disability and POLAR4/IMD participation quintiles. Data is provided an institution level only, in order to ensure sector comparability. Internal subject-level data is aligned to our organisational structure and not as meaningful to an external audience.

Mixed	90%	72%	70%	88%	77%	89%
Other	[Low]	78%	64%	91%	64%	83%
White	81%	82%	82%	87%	86%	83%

3. Assessment and Marking Practices

All programmes delivered at Keele are subject to rigorous approval and review processes that are closely linked to the [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#). Assessment and Marking practices are underpinned by clear and robust regulations and policies which ensure consistency, including the [Assessment and Feedback Code of Practice](#). [Regulation D1: Assessment](#) sets out a range of rules and considerations related to assessment, including assessment criteria, external examiners, and re-assessment. This regulation is supported by detailed guidance and accompanying documentation, which outline key information about [learning principles](#), [assessment criteria](#) and [marking and moderation](#). Strict anonymity is observed in the assessment and marking processes wherever possible, and all examination boards consider students anonymously when agreeing module, progression and award outcomes.

4. Academic Governance

Keele maintains a stringent set of regulations and policies which support academic governance across the university and are contained within the [Keele Academic Regulations and Policy Index](#). These regulations outline all processes and procedures for the awarding of academic degrees, including rules for Boards of Examiners, Codes of Conduct for students, and details on module condonement and compensation. A comprehensive bank of underpinning policies, procedures and codes of practice is held within the University's [Policy Zone](#).

Within Keele, [Senate](#) is the University's supreme academic decision-making body. Senate is supported in its role by its sub-[committees](#), which include Education Committee and Quality, Academic Standards and Education Policy Sub-Committee. The University Examination Board also reports to Senate. Senate and its sub-committees receive annual reports on student outcomes, student metrics linked to student attainment, and reports on the prevalence and outcomes of academic appeals and academic misconduct cases.

External examiners are appointed for each programme and are key to Keele's quality assurance process. External examiners are typically senior academics experienced in assessment, curriculum design, and enhancement of the student experience. The University provides central- and subject-based training for all external examiners. A summary and overview of external examiner reports is provided annually to Education Committee. All programmes have at least one external examiner who is a subject specialist and confirms that the assessments and the standards which students achieve reflect sector expectations and the relevant national reference points and professional body requirements (where applicable).

5. Classification Algorithms

Keele's degree algorithms and progression rules for taught programmes are published as part of the [University regulatory framework](#) and set out the way the University classifies its awards for taught programmes clearly for students and staff. In 2021, the University undertook a comprehensive review of its degree algorithm to ensure it remained in line with external reference points and reflected sector good practice. Following this review, a revised algorithm for undergraduate study was approved by Senate for all new undergraduate students who began their studies at Keele from September 2022 onwards. The impact of the changes to the degree algorithm will be seen from 2024-25 onwards.

6. Teaching Practices and Learning Resources

Keele closely monitors its education-related performance metrics at Programme and School level. The promotion of an evidence-based approach to improvements in education practice and improving student

outcomes is firmly established and used particularly strongly in the monitoring of progress against the University's Access and Participation Plan. Keele was awarded overall Gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023, with a Gold rating for Student Experience and Silver for Student Outcomes.

Keele is committed to supporting the success of its students and has implemented a range of initiatives to support this. These include the Keele Institute for Innovation and Teaching Excellence (KIITE) which supports innovation and excellence in teaching and assessment; a Student Support Team which includes Student Experience and Support Officers allocated to each academic school; an Academic and Digital Skills team; an Academic Mentor Code of Practice; the 'My Keele Journey' student engagement dashboard; and ongoing capital investments in teaching space. In Summer 2023, Senate approved a revised set of Keele Graduate Attributes with aligned Curriculum Expectations which underpins our ongoing programme of curriculum design and enhancement. In 2024-25 a review of the Marking and Moderation Policy will take place to ensure practices are effective and up to date.

7. Identifying Good Practice and Actions

The University is confident that its thoughtful, reflective and self-critical approach to the setting and maintenance of academic standards is also reflected in the culture of continuous enhancement of its portfolio of programmes and their delivery. Many enhancements achieved over recent years have been the result of cross-faculty projects and initiatives, achieved by working in partnership with student bodies, professional services, external peers and statutory and regulatory organisations. In 2023-24, the University developed an [Inclusive Education Framework](#), which reflects the University's commitment to ensure that all students, including those with protected characteristics and beyond, can participate and thrive in every aspect of the educational experience.

In Summer 2023, Keele worked with AdvanceHE to conduct an effectiveness review of Senate, scrutinising current procedures to support continuous improvement of Senate and dependent academic governance processes. The recommendations from this review led to changes to the schedule of delegation and responsibilities of Senate sub-committees to ensure that decisions are taken at an appropriate level, with the correct level of scrutiny.

An increasingly sophisticated approach to the use of metrics, such as those generated for the TEF and APP, to understand student outcomes allows the University to continue to address the needs of an increasingly diverse student body and to continue to achieve excellence in learning and teaching resulting in excellent student outcomes, benchmarked appropriately against national degree standards.

8. Risks and Challenges

The University is confident that the standards of its academic awards are high and in line with national expectations. Keele's awarding practices are commended by external examiners and supported by robust and self-critical reflection at all levels of the University. As a result, Keele is confident that its graduates are emerging with an award which is fair and accurately reflects their academic achievement in preparation for employment and in line with sector expectations.