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**Degree Outcomes Statement – Edge Hill University**

At Edge Hill University we strive to ensure that the standards of our degrees are appropriately set and maintained, and that our qualifications hold their value at the point of award and over time. This Statement provides evidence to our [Academic Board](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/academic-governance/) and [Board of Governors](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/corporate-information/board-of-governors), students, employers and professional and regulatory bodies that the University’s academic governance arrangements are robust and ensure that our qualifications meet sector recognised standards.

Data on the University’s degree classification profile over the past five academic sessions is provided. The narrative in this Statement is generally applicable to the whole of that period, however, in May 2020 the University was required to develop temporary regulations to mitigate the impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The arrangements for the graduating cohort of 2019/20 therefore vary from the standard approach and full details are given in the body of this Statement.

# Institutional degree classification profile

**Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic 2019/20**

In May 2020 the University approved a [Framework for the Assessment, Progression and Award of Qualifications to Students undertaking taught programmes (incorporating Temporary Regulations)](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/appendix-15-framework-for-the-assessment-progression-and-award-of-qualifications-in-extraordinary-circumstances-2019-20.pdf). This Framework was developed to mitigate the impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic, and to allow for the assessment, progression and confirmation of credit and qualifications for students within an agreed set of academic standards in these extraordinary circumstances. At all stages in the development of this Framework, the University followed regulatory guidance from the Office for Students and advice from the Quality Assurance Agency. The provisions within the Framework were wide ranging, recognising the University’s pivot to online teaching and learning in March 2020, and the corresponding adjustments to teaching, learning and assessment strategies for the period. The main feature of the Temporary Regulations that had the potential to impact on classifications was the introduction of a ‘no-detriment’ approach. That is, providing the threshold (Pass) standard was met, marks achieved during the Pandemic were not counted if they fell below the student’s regular standard prior to the pandemic (‘the benchmark’). Full details of the whole scheme are provided in the Framework.

# **Assessment and marking practices**

The University’s [quality management](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/quality-management-handbook/) strategy, and individual strategies for [teaching, learning and assessment](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/centre-learning-teaching-clt/strategies-and-policies/) underpin programme design, monitoring and evaluation. All of our degrees undergo detailed academic scrutiny at the point of approval ([‘validation’](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/validation/)) which ensures that programme content, Intended Learning Outcomes, teaching and assessment are aligned with national reference points, specifically the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code), [The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of Degree-Awarding Bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/qualifications-and-credit-frameworks), and discipline-specific [Subject Benchmark Statements](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements). Degrees conferring professional recognition or Licence to Practise, for example in law, medicine and teacher education, are also aligned with the standards of relevant [Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/professional-accreditations/). Internal validation panels include external academic subject experts of other degree providers who support them in making judgements on programme standards and quality.

Academic staff undergo detailed preparation and training for assessment which includes a [postgraduate teaching certificate](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/centre-learning-teaching-clt/postgraduate-certificate-in-teaching-in-higher-education/) and [professional development programme](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/centre-learning-teaching-clt/professional-development-series/) led by staff of the Centre for Learning and Teaching, supported by [Learning and Teaching Fellows](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/centre-learning-teaching-clt/fellows/). Specific support is provided for academic partner organisations and employers who contribute to students’ assessment. Coursework briefs and examinations are set in accordance with validated Intended Learning Outcomes, and assessment criteria measure and grade student attainment beyond threshold (Pass) standard. A process of internal verification ([‘moderation’](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/files/2013/01/MarkingModeratingAssessedWork.pdf)) supports the quality and consistency of marking and feedback within programmes and subjects. Students are able to notify the University of any special circumstances impacting on their ability to perform to the best of their potential, through the [Exceptional Mitigating Circumstances](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/academic-regulations-2020-21-appendix-7-procedures-for-the-submission-of-exceptional-mitigating-circumstances-2020-21/) scheme, and [Appeals Procedures](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/academic-regulations-2020-21-appendix-22-academic-appeals-procedures-2020-21/) where necessary.

All degrees are subject to [annual monitoring](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/monitoring-and-review/) which includes the sampling of assessed student work by suitably-qualified [external examiners](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/external-examiners/) who confirm that the standards set at validation are being adhered to, that students are meeting those standards, and that assessment is of high quality. We are scrupulous in our appointment and use of external examiners, protecting their independence to make academic judgements on our degrees. External examiners’ reports for the most recent completed academic year confirmed that standards remained current and aligned with national reference points across all programmes, that grading and classification were comparable with other degree providers, and that students were achieving the standards set for them through valid and fair assessment. External examiners receive a detailed briefing and induction and attend Module and Progression & Award Boards to verify they are conducted fairly and consistently in accordance with our own [Academic Regulations](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/academic-regulations-2020-21/).

# **Academic governance**

Reporting to the University’s governing body, the Academic Board has ultimate responsibility for the setting and maintenance of degree standards. Processes for, and outcomes from, programme validation, monitoring (including external examiners) and review are overseen by the Academic Quality Enhancement Committee on behalf of the Academic Board. No degree may be delivered without AQEC approval, and a full list of approved awards accompanies our regulations.

In addition to annual monitoring, a [five-yearly review](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/aqdu/monitoring-and-review/) of each academic department/ subject area supports continued programme approval by AQEC. Reports of the most recent reviews to be conducted confirm that our degree standards meet national expectations. Monitoring and review also consider the standards of Edge Hill programmes delivered by our academic partner organisations for which we are ultimately responsible. Programme modification procedures ensure that curricula remain appropriate and current between scheduled reviews.

Academic Board and its committees receive reports on final degree classifications, academic appeals and academic malpractice cases which supports the continuous monitoring of standards. Assessment strategies, policies and regulations, including those governing malpractice and appeals, are kept under continuous review, and proactive monitoring and intervention help safeguard standards. Annual monitoring detects grade improvement at individual programme level and explores how intake standards attained from different types of entry qualification, enhanced teaching and assessment practices and academic support have contributed to student achievement.

The Regulations Review Sub-Committee oversees the continued appropriateness and fairness of our academic regulations and advises the Learning and Teaching Committee on any changes for the approval of Academic Board. The External Examiners Sub-Committee has oversight of external examiners, their appointment and reports, and assures AQEC and the Academic Board that they are discharging their responsibilities appropriately and that any matters raised by them have received proper consideration. An annual Academic Assurance Report helps satisfy the Board of Governors that we continue to meet national expectations and regulatory requirements for degree standards.

# **Classification algorithms**

The University last reviewed its permanent approach to classifying honours degrees in 2016. This was in response to then-emerging concerns expressed by government about the classification systems applied by higher education providers across the United Kingdom. The impact of the review was that the University moved to a single system for classification, which came into effect in July 2019 and is described below.

The University applies the standard classification bands used across the sector. Classifications are determined by a weighted average percentage mark (APM) which is calculated using the average mark from Level 5 and Level 6 study, weighted at 40% and 60% respectively. The lowest mark, to the value of 20 credits, is discarded. The only deviation from this approach is where an honours degree has an atypical credit total, for example Conversion Degrees or programmes that incorporate a credit-bearing placement year. In these cases, the standard algorithm is adapted as appropriate for the different credit totals and values.

Placing greater weight on marks from the final year ensures that classifications appropriately reflect the standard of performance a student has achieved on obtaining their qualification, acknowledging the accumulation of knowledge, expertise and skills in the preceding years. Discarding the lowest mark recognises consistent performance by omitting outliers from the final degree classification. It also supports students to undertake some study outside of their specialism, for example, diversifying their learning (in up to 20 credits) to take a language module without fear that this may impact on their final classification.

Where a student is within 2% of a higher classification band, the University will consider whether a higher classification is appropriate and justified. In these cases either the APM for the final year must be at the higher classification standard, or at least half the module marks across Levels 5 and 6 must be in the higher classification band for that classification to be awarded. The application of this discretion is governed by guidance specified in Appendix 12 to the Academic Regulations.

Students are required to successfully complete all modules registered against their programme in order to qualify for an award. This incorporates the University’s provision for condonement. Where a student is unsuccessful at the first attempt they may be offered a maximum of two reassessment opportunities, which will be capped at the pass mark. This is in line with the total number of re-sits/ re-takes permitted across the sector, as outlined in the [Universities UK publication 'Understanding Degree Algorithms'](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2017/understanding-degree-algorithms.pdf).

Edge Hill’s classification algorithm is published on the University’s [Academic Regulations web pages](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/academic-regulations-2020-21.pdf). We also publish an [explanation of classifications](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/registry/temporary-regulations-2020-21/) for students and ensure they are aware of this information through central communications and local briefings.

# **Teaching practices and learning resources**

University-led improvements to teaching, assessment and student support have had a cumulative positive impact on degree outcomes during the last five years. A [Taught Degrees Framework](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/centre-learning-teaching-clt/taught-degrees-framework/) supports curriculum design and delivery by requiring that course teams systematically plan and describe the ‘student journey’ from induction, through in-programme transitions to graduation and employment or further study. Specific sections of the Framework provide advice and guidance on developing students’ academic and employability skills and integrating work-related and placement learning within the curriculum. Separate guidance governs the use of learning technologies, including our ‘Learning Edge’ Blackboard virtual learning environment, and the operation of personal academic tutoring and student peer mentoring. Learning resources and support have been enhanced and expanded over time culminating in Catalyst, a £26 million development completed in 2018 and housing library and learning services, student support and careers advisors, including support for students with specific learning difficulties or disabilities. Generous IT provision is available to all students, and specialist labs, studios and simulation facilities support the delivery of individual subjects. Student satisfaction with learning resources exceeded the national average in the 2020 NSS, at 90.39% (compared to the average of 86.48%).

# **Identifying good practice and actions**

Many of our innovations have resulted from high-level, cross-faculty projects and developmental enquiries, all aligned with the University’s over-arching [strategy](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/strategic-plan-2013-2020/) and designed to address areas for improvement as well as exposing and sharing good practice, thus benefiting students across our whole portfolio of degrees. Programme design prioritises equal opportunity and inclusive learning in line with University strategy for widening [access and participation](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/access-participation-plan/), and policies and procedures for reasonable adjustments and extenuating mitigating circumstances help ensure that individuals including those with specific learning difficulties or disabilities are not disadvantaged. The Taught Degrees Framework sets specific expectations of high-quality assessment to which have been added a series of ‘baseline’ assessment practices which all programmes must follow. A ‘What You Need To Know About Assessment’ Guide, written in plain English and accessible by all students, focuses on developing their understanding of assessment, the nature of feedback and how to use it effectively. Training and mentoring are provided for internal assessors, and plans are being advanced for us to deliver [nationally-accredited external examiner training](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/training-events/professional-development/external-examining-course) to our own staff.

# **Risks and challenges**

Despite having confidence in our assessment processes and practices we are never complacent. Degree outcomes are monitored continuously by senior managers and evaluated and acted on by Faculties, the Academic Board and its committees. External examiners’ reports are responded to promptly and fully. As our portfolio of degrees increases and our student intake grows more diverse we will continue to address the learning needs of students with a wide range of previous educational backgrounds, qualifications and protected characteristics, supporting the development of excellence in learning and teaching to underpin maximum student success against national degree standards. To this end, current University agendas include the review and redesign of undergraduate first year assessment, increasing levels of attainment among young male learners, and enhancing the support already provided for students’ mental health.

# **Contributors and oversight**

The University first published a Degree Outcomes Statement in July 2020. This Statement was prepared by a cross-university working group led by the Academic Registrar, Dean of Teaching and Learning Development and Director of Quality Assurance reporting to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary and the Academic Board. Professor Nazira Karodia, Dean of the Faculty of Science and Engineering and Professor of Science Education at the University of Wolverhampton served as the independent external verifier of the Statement and supporting evidence. The final Statement was approved by the University’s Board of Governors in July 2020.

This latest iteration of the University’s Degree Outcomes Statement is substantially the same as the 2020 report, though updated data on student outcomes is provided, and details of the University’s arrangements to mitigate the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic are included.

The updated Statement was considered within the University’s academic governance structure during 2020/21, and received by the University’s Board of Governors in July 2021.