

Degree Outcomes Statement 2023-24		Ref: PL.74-v001	
Brief Description & Purpose:	This document provides an update on Northumbria's previous degree outcomes statements which are accessible here . It provides a comprehensive overview of Northumbria's awards profile over the last six years, and a reflection on recent changes in outcomes, particularly for specific groups of students. The Statement also highlights some key activities, initiatives and developments that potentially impact on our degree outcomes profile		
Applicable to (list cohorts):	Staff: All staff, including Governors and co-opted Board Committee Members, partners, stakeholders and other interested parties	Students: All students	Third Parties: All who are in a formal relationship with the University, including prospective students
Effective From:	01 September 2025	Last Review Date:	25 January 2025
Approval Authority:	Education Committee/Academic Board	Approved:	Mach 2025
Executive Owner:	Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education)	Business Owner:	Academic Registrar
Next Review Date:	31 January 2026	Publication External Y/N	Y

Degree Outcomes Statement for 2023/24

1. Purpose of the Statement

The purpose of this statement is to present prospective and current undergraduate students, partners, stakeholders and other interested parties with information and assurance on how the University monitors and manages the quality and standards of its undergraduate awards.

The statement also aims to meet the expectations of the UK Standing Committee on Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) [Statement of Intent](#) and associated principles and guidance.

It provides a comprehensive overview of Northumbria's undergraduate awards profile over the last six years, and a reflection on recent changes in outcomes, particularly for specific groups of students. The Statement also highlights some key activities, initiatives and developments that potentially impact on our degree outcomes profile.

Northumbria's previous degree outcomes statements are accessible [here](#).

2. Degree Outcomes Data and Analysis 2018/19 - 2023/24

	2018/9	2019/0	2020/1	2021/2	2022/3	2023/4
NU Higher First Degrees (%)	81.0%	83.9%	83.3%	81.2%	78.6%	77.6%
NU Higher First Degrees / NU All First Degrees (#)	4164 / 5139	4117 / 4906	4173 / 5008	3906 / 4808	4010 / 5102	3990 / 5139
UK Higher Degrees Rank (Times Good University Guide)	49	47	59**	57	57****	N/A
UK BAME attainment gap (against UK white)	-11.1%	-10.3%	-11.3%	-9.3%	-8.0%	-6.0%
UK Black attainment gap (against UK white)	-18.9%	-27.8%	-36.5%	-20.4%	-10.8%	-4.1%
Non-UK attainment gap (against Home) *	-18.8%	-12.2%	-8.8%	-17.7%	-21.4%	-19.5%
Gender attainment gap (Male against Female)	-1.9%	-2.1%	-3.1%	-10.3%	-6.1%	-11.2%
Mature attainment gap (against young)	-9.1%	-9.5%	-7.9%	-2.8%	-3.9%	0.3%
POLAR 1 attainment gap (against POLAR4 2-5) ***	-2.5%	-6.1%	-7.9%	-4.7%	-7.2%	-5.1%
POLAR 1+2 attainment gap (against POLAR4 3-5) ***	-3.1%	-6.6%	-7.7%	-4.2%	-5.2%	-4.3%

2022/3 and 2023/4 notes: Methodology for calculating Good Honours and entry points has been based upon an interpretation of Good Honours as defined for previous Student Return data. As award submission data has now fundamentally changed, and no methodology has been made available by JISC/HESA, this is provided on a 'best efforts' basis.

* based on Domicile

** Published ranks differ as Times Good University Guide combined multiple years to offset pandemic impact

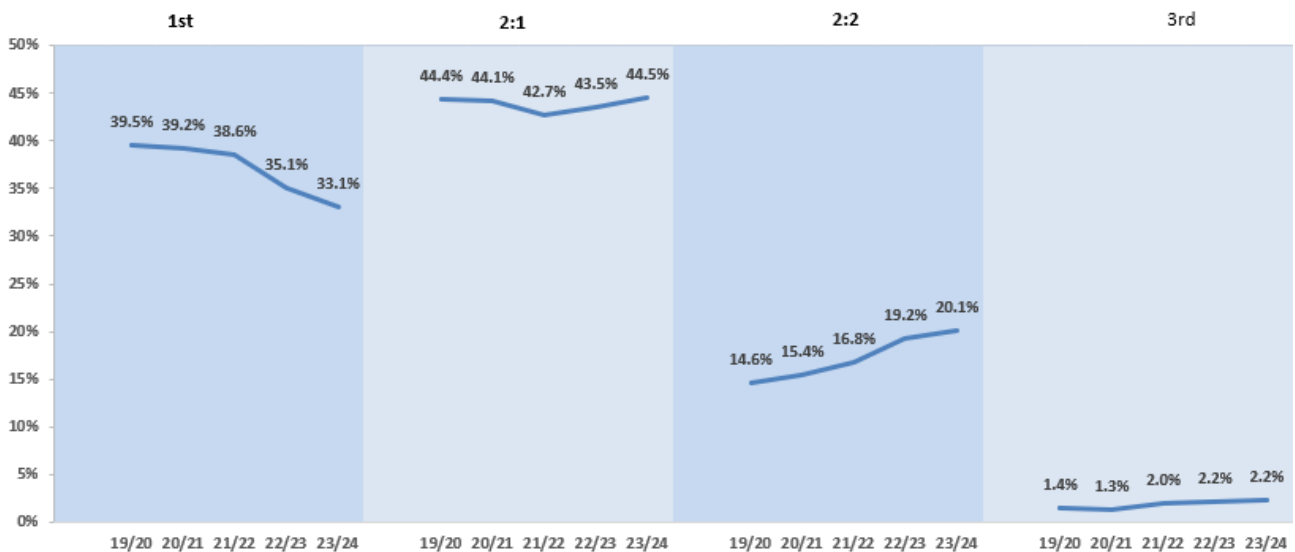
*** under 21 on entry

****Times Good University Guide 2025 used same data as previous year's publication due to delay in data publication by HESA/JISC in 2024.

Sources of data: 2015/6 to 2019/0 - SITS (31/01/2025). 2021/2-2023/4 - Data Warehouse Awards Fact dataset v0.4 (18/02/2025)

Good awards for 2023/24 have dropped by 1.0 percentage points from 78.6% to 77.6% remaining below pre-pandemic levels. Figure 1 below shows that this decrease is driven by a fall in the proportion of 1sts which has been partially offset by an increase in the proportion of 2:2s. The proportion of 2:1s and 3rds has remained relatively static over the 6-year period. Although sector data is not yet available for 2023/24, the 2022/23 data shows that Northumbria continues to be ranked mid-sector on the good awards measure.

Figure 1 – Northumbria University trends in undergraduate degree classifications



The UK black attainment gap has narrowed to 4.1 percentage points, down from a peak of 36.5 percentage points in 2020/21 with the closing of the gap in the proportion receiving 1sts particularly evident. It should be noted that the small population of black students means this figure has the potential to be highly variable and this difference in outcomes will continue to be a high priority.

The attainment gap between UK domiciled students and non-UK domiciled students has closed but only marginally from 21.4% in 2022/23 to 19.5% in 2023/24 so remains an area of focus for the university. The gap has increased by 10.7% points since 2020/21 driven by a sharp decline in the proportion of 1sts awarded to non-UK students (33.5% to 15.6%) compared to a more gradual decline for UK domiciled students (40.2% to 36.5%).

The attainment gap for mature students is no longer evident after reaching almost 10% points in 2019/20. The gender attainment gap has increased in the most recent year and is now the largest gap seen in the last six years. This widening gap is driven primarily by a sharp decrease in the proportion of male students being awarded a 1st while the proportion of female students awarded a 1st has remained relatively static over the six-year period.

The University's [Access and Participation Plan](#) (approved by the Office for Students in October 2023) and covering the period 2024/25 to 2027-28 includes objectives to close attainment gaps for black students, male students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

3. Assessment and marking practices

The University has a robust and standardised approach to assessment and marking, which is set out in the [Assessment for Learning and Achievement policy](#). This policy directly relates to the Office for Students conditions of registration specifically relating to quality, reliable standards and positive outcomes for all students and guidance from the Quality Assurance Agency. The policy emphasises the alignment between assessment and marking and programme learning outcomes. It includes guidance on the consistent use of grade descriptors, marking schemes and assessment criteria, assessment briefs, feedback standards, and approval of assessment tasks. Student views on assessment and feedback are monitored throughout the year through formal routes such as Staff, Student Programme Committees using programme reps, Module Evaluation Questionnaires and NSS, all of which feed into Continuous Programme Performance Review.

In line with sector good practice, external examiners actively engage in the approval of assessment tasks, the moderation of student work at module level and overall outcomes at programme level to confirm assessment quality and standards. Programme Assessment Boards (PABs) consider feedback from external examiners, student profiles and adherence to regulations in confirming student progression and awarding degrees. Marking practice and standards are reviewed through the Continuous Programme Performance Review (CPPR) process, the outcomes of which are scrutinised at Faculty Education Committees, Faculty Executive Groups and the Quality and Standards Sub-committee.

All academic staff are expected to achieve HEA fellowship, for which assessment and feedback is a core area of activity, and CPD sessions on these specific topics are required as part of staff development. The University also delivers a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) for academic staff new to teaching, which includes a focus on assessment and marking and incorporates HEA fellowship. The Organisation Development Team within HR, provides guidance on assessment design and exemplars of good practice on the website and through both open and tailored sessions on assessment practice.

Data from annual reports submitted by External Examiners for 2023/24 show that 100% of external examiners confirmed that the University's approach to quality and standards was consistent with sector norms. This strongly indicates that external examiner induction and support is robust, and that assessment processes are effective and efficient overall.

4. Academic governance and processes

Overseen by the Board of Governors and the University Executive, the University manages its portfolio and curriculum through Academic Board, Education Committee and Planning Committee as part of its [governance structure](#). There is a university-wide approach to assessment regulations, which are overseen and approved by Academic Board. The roles, remit and purpose of the University's governing committees and organisational structures are clearly defined and subject to regular review.

Northumbria's [Quality and Standards Framework](#) articulates the overarching processes and governance context for managing quality and standards. Programme and partnership approval and review processes ensure standards are defined, monitored and maintained. Approval and review documentation, including panel guidance and checklists, are designed to articulate and confirm that Northumbria's programmes meet external requirements (including Degree and Higher Apprenticeship standards), and to ensure the quality, currency and consistency of awards over time. Student involvement is integral to this ongoing process.

Continuous Programme Performance Review (CPPR) provides a strong, systematic, accountable and data informed approach to annual monitoring activity. CPPR is part of the Review strand of the Northumbria Quality and Standards Framework and is a key part of the following related processes:

- Institutional performance review and quality and standards monitoring for Board of Governors.
- Partner performance review.

CPPR provides a robust and dynamic quality and student-focused assurance and enhancement tool. It offers a single place for standardised and timely data to support specific foci including the Office for Students' Conditions of Registration and EDI requirements. Critical

to the success of this approach is the opportunity for student voice and feedback at all review points.

Adherence to the National Qualifications Framework, QAA Subject Benchmarks and PSRB requirements is confirmed by external, discipline-specific input to all approval and review panels. External advice and guidance is also provided by external examiners, relevant professional bodies and employer networks relating to practice. Partnership approval and review sits within this framework, with partner programmes considered alongside the equivalent programmes delivered in Newcastle.

5. Classification algorithms

The algorithm for the classification of an honours degree is applied consistently to all students across the University and is detailed in the [Academic Regulations for Taught Awards](#). Awards are calculated automatically with examination board discretion exceptionally applied only where there are approved extenuating circumstances. Final year Programme Assessment Boards (PABs) (which include external examiners) provide oversight of all outcomes. Students have access to on-line guidance on how their degree is classified on the student portal and in their Programme Handbook.

Currently the degree classification algorithm is based on the best average of either final year marks or a combination of levels 5 and 6 (weighted 40%:60%), whichever is more favourable to the student. Students are also considered for a higher classification where their average mark place them within 2% of the higher classification.

There are established threshold rules for students to progress to the next stage of their programme. The emphasis is on ensuring students have the opportunity to succeed, whilst maintaining the integrity of the award.

Northumbria continues to monitor the appropriateness of its classification algorithm and is undertaking a full review as part of its Education Strategic Delivery Plan from 2024.

6. Programme design, teaching practices and learning resources

Northumbria's [Programme Framework for Northumbria Awards \(PFNA\)](#), introduced in 2015/16, ensures all programmes at the point of design and approval are subject to standard criteria. The Framework has four pillars: research informed learning; employability; assessment for learning and achievement, and technology enhanced learning. PFNA underpins the aim that all Northumbria graduates are prepared for employment or future study. In 2020 an explicit commitment to inclusivity was added to the framework to bring focus to issues of diversity, inclusion, decolonisation and globalisation. The Northumbria graduate characteristics, as summarised below, are the shared outcome of all Northumbria Programmes, providing a synergy between Northumbria's research and teaching excellence.

A Northumbria graduate will be able to:

- Be able to think independently, understand and justify their own opinions, and will recognise the need to challenge their thinking, and the thinking of others
- Be able to apply their disciplinary knowledge to complex problems in their discipline and its professional or industrial practice in order to identify appropriate solutions which are sustainable and justifiable.
- Value curiosity, collaboration and analysis as keystones in the creation of new knowledge and practice

- Be able to communicate effectively to diverse audiences utilising a range of formats and media
- Display the attitudes and skills to engage and work constructively and sensitively in multi-cultural environments and teams and have an awareness of ethical considerations
- Combine all of the above to support their future employability and long term career prospects

In addition, a Northumbria Masters graduate will be able to:

PG Cert / Diploma:

- Critically reflect on their own work and that of others
- Present and justify their work, in the context of wider theories and practice, to their peers
- Display and critically apply expert knowledge within areas of their discipline and /or its practice

Master's degree will further be able to:

- Conceptualise, theorise and undertake research which addresses complex issues and which advances understanding within the discipline or practice
- Contribute to the creation of new knowledge and /or applications to practice within their discipline through a critical understanding of the processes through which knowledge is created.
- Formulate balanced judgements when considering incomplete or ambiguous data and can communicate these judgements clearly to both specialist and non-specialist audiences

A major initiative within the Education Strategic Delivery Plan for 2024 – 2026 is to consider how and when we teach to better reflect the needs of students. A key deliverable from this is to review and enhance our curricula and ensure high standards of quality, efficiency and effectiveness. A Quality, Enhancement and Development (QED) Framework for all Northumbria taught programmes will be developed to enhance student success and eliminate gaps in study and career outcomes between student groups.

The University has a wide range of academic staff professional development of education opportunities. These were identified as an outstanding quality feature in the 2023 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF 2023) for:

- a professional recognition scheme, established in 2015 and accredited by Advance HE, covering staff at all stages of their career
- 69 percentage of academic staff having Advance HE Fellowship, compared to a sector average of 46 per cent, while 78 per cent of staff have academic teaching qualifications
- a teaching qualifications framework embedded in probation and promotion processes
- an extensive induction programme for new academic staff
- a comprehensive peer observation and support scheme, which encourages enhancement and innovation
- support for all staff and students to become digitally fluent.

In addition there is an extension Learning a Teaching programme of CPD available to staff and a Community for Innovation in Teaching and Education (CITE). CITE is a collaborative community of educational innovators, that bring together academics, professional and technical support staff and students from across the University, who have a passion for enhancing our students' learning experience.

The [University Library](#) (which achieves some of the highest student satisfaction levels in the UK) works closely with academic colleagues to develop the [library collections](#) to meet the University's education and research needs. It offers [study skills support](#) sessions and drop-in appointments, as well as working with academics to develop inductions and other provision tailored to particular programmes and subject areas. The Library offers 24/7 access to study space. The value that students place on the skills support is evident in the positive NSS outcomes in this area.

Blackboard Ultra is the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), a system that enables the provision of all learning materials and resources to students as well as facilitating communication/collaboration and evaluating student progress. Lectures and many other taught sessions are recorded and made available to students via this platform. Alongside Northumbria's ongoing commitment to technology enhanced learning, the University has also invested significantly in its campus to support high quality learning and teaching.

Our Student Engagement and Student Life and Wellbeing teams work directly with students and closely with academic personal tutors to support students with a range of issues. There is a particular focus on identifying students who are finding aspects of their experience challenging. Timely interventions are designed to support students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes, alongside supporting their resilience, health and wellbeing.

7. Identifying Good Practice and Actions

The focus of the University Strategy 2030 is three interconnected strategic ambitions:

- Powering an inclusive economy
- Creating new knowledge
- Driving social mobility

The Strategy will be delivered through a set of initiatives within specific Strategic Delivery Plans (SDPs). The Education Strategic Delivery Plan is one of the four core SDPs. Our ambition is to deliver internationally excellent education that is enhanced by our research and cutting-edge professional practice to provide an enriching and empowering academic experience for our students. We will work in partnership with our students and graduates to provide greater equity of access to and success from higher education, enabling them to identify and create a wider range of opportunities for success in their further study, career, and life ambitions.

7.1 Develop and Implement new Quality, Enhancement and Development Framework

The Education Strategic Delivery Plan sets out to develop and implement a framework for all Northumbria taught programmes to enhance student success and eliminate gaps in study and career outcomes between student groups.

The framework will include credit-bearing, transformative and inclusive experiential learning opportunities for all undergraduate students, intended to empower more of our graduates to work in highly skilled professions by enhancing their employability. Aligned to experiential learning, will be an integrated strategic approach to AI, familiarising students with its ethical, appropriate, and effective use in education and the professional workplace.

7.2 Tailored and responsive support for all students

The University aims to provide education services that drive inclusive student success, teaching innovation and quality enhancement, supporting the wellbeing and success of all students. In order to respond to the changing needs and environments, the University continues to review its regulatory and policy framework, ensuring it provides a strong platform for student success while maintaining robust quality and standards.

All students will have access to the necessary resources and support to meet their development needs.

7.3 Support for access and success for students from all backgrounds

During the current strategy period of 2024-2030 the University will deliver equity of opportunity and choice for all students across our campuses by sustaining the proportion of our undergraduate intake from low participation backgrounds and ensuring study success by eliminating any gaps in continuation and retention.

7.3 Education Ecosystem

The University is working to develop a modernised education technical ecosystem in teaching and learning, focusing on creating a 'classroom of the future' that integrates cutting-edge technologies and pedagogical approaches.

Version No.	Reviewer	Date	Changes
1.0	Education Committee Academic Board	March 2025	