

Goldsmiths Degree Outcomes Statement 2020/21

Institutional Degree Classification Profile

Overall Classifications 2016/17 to 2020/21¹

Year	1st	2:1	2:2	3rd	“good degrees”
2016/17	23.6%	60.3%	15.1%	0.9%	83.9%
2017/18	24.9%	57.0%	16.5%	1.5%	81.9%
2018/19	25.4%	54.3%	18.5%	1.9%	79.6%
2019/20	33.9%	51.9%	12.8%	1.5%	85.7%
2020/21	42.7%	49.3%	7.4%	0.6%	91.9%

Goldsmiths’ degree classification profile between 2016/17 and 2018/19 shows that the proportion of “good honours degrees” (1st and 2:1) fell from 83.9% to 79.6%. However, this trend was reversed in 2019/20 and 2020/21 with an increase of 6.1 and 6.3 percentage points respectively, culminating in 91.9% of students graduating with a “good honours degree” in 2020/21.

The proportion of lower second class degrees awarded (2:2) rose gradually from 2016/17 to 2018/19 but fell by 5.7 and 5.4 percentage points in 2019/20 and 2020/21 respectively.

Within the grouping of “good honours degrees” there has been a consistent increase in the percentage of students graduating with first class honours and an equivalent decrease in the proportion of upper second class awards (2:1) over the five-year period.

The changes noted over the last two years may be explained in part by temporary changes to some of Goldsmiths’ assessment regulations and classification algorithm that were put in place to mitigate the effects of the global Coronavirus pandemic. These might be expected to reverse in future years as these changes will not be applied to

¹ HESA Cohort data for undergraduate programmes leading to a level 6 award

cohorts unaffected by the pandemic from 2021/22. These changes are discussed below in the section relating to the degree algorithm.

The change in the proportion of third class degrees awarded in this period is not significant, having varied between 0.6% and 1.9%.

“Good Honours Degrees” by ethnicity 2016/17 to 2020/21

Ethnicity	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21	
	% “good Degrees”	Total Hons. degrees	% “good Degrees”	Total Hons. degrees	% “good Degrees”	Total Hons. degrees	% “good Degrees”	Total Hons. degrees	% “good Degrees”	Total Hons. degrees
Arab	75.0%	20	55.0%	20	78.3%	23	76%	25	95.8%	24
Asian	69.7%	195	67.2%	268	64.2%	338	72.8%	331	88.3%	316
Black	67.8%	121	65.3%	150	70.1%	167	71.9%	139	86.6%	157
Chinese	83.7%	49	72.6%	62	75.9%	58	86.8%	68	80.5%	77
Mixed	81.7%	120	90.2%	122	82.8%	122	89.5%	152	92.8%	138
White	90.3%	920	89.7%	881	88.0%	855	92.4%	869	95.2%	768
Other	70.0%	30	75.6%	41	69.8%	53	82.4%	51	91.2%	68
Refused/ not known	77.5%	40	80.0%	15	82.4%	17	100.0%	10	100.0%	25
Total	83.9%	1495	81.9%	1559	79.6%	1633	85.7%	1645	91.9%	1573

Goldsmiths is committed to narrowing the degree awarding gap for students from different demographic groups as set out in its 2020-2025 [Access and Participation Plan](#). The analysis by declared ethnicity of “good honours degrees” awarded during this period shows a fluctuating though gradually narrowing gap between white and black students and white and Asian students over the first four years and a significant reduction in 2020/21. As noted above, this may be due in part to the regulatory changes made in 2019/20 and 2020/21 and the gap may therefore widen following the withdrawal of these temporary changes. However, it is notable that the general rise in good honours in 2019/20 was not reflected in the awards of black students. It is possible that this may be due to the greater level of discretionary autonomy granted to Boards of Examiners under the Exceptional Academic Regulations in that year to raise student classifications on the basis of performance in previous years, since this was the main change in arrangements between 2019/20 and 2020/21. The more general rise noted in 2020/21 may then be attributable to these changes combined with a more consistent, rules-based, application of the College’s academic regulations, policies and procedures, in addition to other

factors noted below such as the focus on the development of inclusive teaching and assessment. An analysis of awarding gaps between other demographic groups has not identified any significant variation from the general trends noted above. Students with a declared disability receive a greater proportion of “good honours degrees” than those without.

Assessment and Marking Practices

Goldsmiths employs a range of methods to ensure that its assessment and marking practices meet sector benchmarks and that students’ results accurately reflect their performance.

As part of its programme approval procedures, the College requires all new programmes to be developed with due reference to the nationally agreed Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (including Annex D: Outcome Classification Descriptions for FHEQ Level 6 and FQHEIS Level 10 Degrees), and the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, relevant subject benchmark statements and Professional, Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements. In addition, they must conform to Goldsmiths’ own internal regulatory requirements and the aims of its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which encourages the development of inclusive assessment practices. External reviewers are employed as a central part of this process to ensure that programmes meet sector norms.

Each programme of study has its own, discipline-relevant, marking scheme based on the College’s generic grading criteria. Marking schemes are shared with students through programme specifications, handbooks and the VLE. All marking of assessed work that contributes to a student’s final award is carried out with reference to the relevant marking criteria and must be subject to internal and external moderation. The requirements for internal moderation of marked work are expected to be appropriate for the nature and method of the assessment. They range from “blind” double marking of all student work to moderation of a defined selection of work.

External moderation is undertaken by External Examiners who are appointed according to clear criteria to ensure they are suitably qualified for the position. New appointees with no prior experience in the role are assigned a mentor in their first year who is an existing senior external examiner. External Examiners are asked to moderate a selection of marked work that must include examples from each classification and be accompanied by details of the internal moderation process that has been applied. They are members of the Departmental Boards of Examiners and are asked to confirm that the College’s assessment processes fairly measure student achievement against the learning outcomes and that the academic standards set for the awards are appropriate and comparable with those in other UK higher education institution(s) and have been met.

The completion of the moderation process, all marks and final classifications are confirmed by the College’s Boards of Examiners which are comprised of “Departmental

Boards” and “School Boards”. Departmental Boards of Examiners are responsible for assessing the performance of students, and considering results, progression and degree awards to students. School Boards of Examiners are responsible for ratifying decisions taken by the Departmental Boards and considering their recommendations regarding “non-standard” student profiles. A School Board External Examiner is also appointed to each Board.

School Boards of Examiners were introduced in 2019/20 with the aim of ensuring that the College’s assessment and marking processes are carried out consistently, and in line with its published regulations and policies.

These are set out principally in the [Regulations for Taught Programmes](#), the [Assessment Policy and Procedures](#), [Progression and Award Policy for Students on Taught Programmes](#), and the [External Examining Policy and Procedures](#).

Academic Governance

[Council](#) is Goldsmiths’ senior governing body which is responsible for the management and administration of the College and is accountable to external bodies, including the Office for Students.

[Academic Board](#) is accountable to Council for all academic matters including maintaining and monitoring the academic standards of the College and approving academic regulations. It establishes committees and sub-committees to advise it and act on its behalf within its areas of responsibility. Its committees make recommendations to Academic Board and alert it to areas of risk through impact reports produced following each meeting.

The academic regulations and associated policies and procedures set out in the [Goldsmiths Academic Manual](#) provide the framework by which the College ensures the quality and standards of its awards. The [Regulations Committee](#) has delegated responsibility for the oversight of the regulations and maintenance of a register of associated policies, including a schedule for their review.

The [Quality and Standards Committee](#) is responsible for considering, advising on, and developing the College’s framework and policies for assuring the quality and standards of all awards and for monitoring and maintaining the effectiveness with which these are implemented. In this capacity it receives overview reports on: degree classifications; External Examiners’ reports; Boards of Examiners decisions; academic appeals; and extenuating circumstances. The Committee recommends actions, as necessary, and considers developments and updates to policies and procedures for programmes leading to Goldsmiths awards.

The [Academic Development Committee](#) and [Programme Scrutiny Sub-Committee](#) are responsible for the ongoing approval and amendment of programmes and their withdrawal.

The [Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee](#) has strategic oversight for all aspects of learning, teaching, enhancement, and the student experience including the quality of learning and teaching in relation to any award with which the College is associated. It achieves this through consideration of reports on the quality of teaching and learning; student survey data; and reports relating to College's Access and Participation Plan from its sub-committee, the [Student Access, Participation and Outcomes Sub-Committee](#).

This Degree Outcomes Statement has been reviewed by a School Board External Examiner and considered by the Quality and Standards Committee prior to recommendation for approval by Council.

The College will continue to monitor its degree classification profile to ensure it appropriately reflects the achievements of its students and protects the value of its qualifications over time. This is a standing agenda item of Quality and Standards Committee each year. The College also intends to undertake a detailed review of degree outcomes on a five-year cycle, unless a substantive change in degree outcomes trends indicates that earlier review is necessary or if the College determines earlier review is necessary (for example, on the basis of substantive changes to its programmes of study and/or changes to the classification algorithm). The Degree Outcomes Statement will be updated annually including amendments to analysis of the data.

Classification Algorithm

Goldsmiths has operated a single [degree classification algorithm](#) for its undergraduate awards since 2005/06, which remained unchanged until 2019/20.

The algorithm used a scheme entitled 'Formula for the Final Weighted Average Mark' under which classification was calculated using the marks from modules to the value of 300 credits as follows:

Best 90 credits at Level 4 (year one) weighting applied x1
Best 105 credits at Level 5 (year two) weighting applied x3
Best 105 credits at Level 6 (year three) weighting applied x5

Goldsmiths' academic regulations, policies and procedures also include the following provisions which may affect students' final classification:

- Students are permitted three attempts to pass an assessment. Following a first failed attempt, the grade awarded for any subsequent attempt is capped at the pass mark.

- In certain circumstances, on undergraduate programmes, credit may be awarded for a narrowly failed module when the overall mark for the other modules at the same level is high enough to compensate for the failed mark. No more than 60 credits may be compensated and no more than 30 at any single level of a programme. Compensation can normally only be applied when a student has exhausted all permitted attempts at a module.
- Students whose final weighted average mark falls within 2% below the borderline between two classes of Honours and who have obtained marks in the higher classification in modules totalling at least 120 credits in value at Levels 5 and 6, are automatically awarded the higher classification. If they have only obtained marks in the higher classification in modules totalling at least 90 credits in value at Levels 5 and 6, they may be considered for the award of the higher classification if they have made a claim for extenuating circumstances which has not been considered previously.

In 2019/20, in order to mitigate the possible effect of the pandemic on students' final classification, a number of temporary regulatory amendments were made following the adoption of Goldsmiths [Exceptional Academic Regulations](#). These included:

- A reduction in the number of the best credits taken in 2019/20 that would contribute to the classification of students graduating in future years or, in the case of Level 4, to allow for that cohort's final degree classification to be calculated using an additional algorithm that discounted first year marks in full, using whichever calculation provided the higher classification outcome for students.
- For second year students graduating in 2020/21 and finalists graduating in 2019/20, a "no detriment" approach was adopted for the year by which it was possible for a Board of Examiners to recommend uplift to a higher classification where there was evidence to suggest that a student's performance had worsened as a result of the emergency situation.
- Students were not required to provide documentary evidence of extenuating circumstances beyond a self-certification statement.
- The cap on further attempts at modules failed for the first time in 2019/20 was removed.

Goldsmiths stopped operating under its Exceptional Academic Regulations in 2020/21 although, as noted above, the temporary changes that were approved for 2019/20 continue to apply to the affected cohorts when calculating their final classification.

However, in recognition of the continuing impact of the pandemic, it was agreed to:

- Maintain the suspension of the cap applied to failed assessments.
- Remove the requirement for students to have submitted an extenuating circumstances application when Boards of Examiners consider borderline classifications.
- Allow Boards of Examiners to permit progression from Level 4 to Level 5 and from Level 5 to Level 6 for undergraduate students on the basis of the application of compensation without the need for a student to have exhausted all attempts to pass the module(s) so that students' final undergraduate degree classification is calculated using fewer than 300 credits as follows:

Best 90 credits at Level 4, weighted 1
 Best 90 credits at Level 5, weighted 3
 Best 90 credits at Level 6, weighted 5

(students graduating in 2020/21, where Levels 5 and 6 were studied in 2019/20 and 2020/21)

No credits counted from Level 4
 Best 90 credits at Level 5, weighted 3
 Best 105 credits at Level 6, weighted 5

(students graduating in 2021/22, where Levels 4 and 5 were studied in 2019/20 and 2020/21)

No credits counted from Level 4
 Best 105 credits at Level 5, weighted 3
 Best 105 credits at Level 6, weighted 5

(students graduating in 2022/23, where Level 4 was studied in 2020/21)

As a result of reviewing the impact of these temporary changes, it was felt that the College's previous practice of including credit at Level 4 within the classification algorithm was very unusual across the sector and it was therefore agreed to remove this permanently from 2021/22 onwards. For all cohorts entering in 2021/22 onwards, the revised algorithm is therefore:

Final degree classification is calculated using the marks from modules to the value of 210 credits as follows:

Best 105 credits at Level 5 (year two) weighting applied x3
 Best 105 credits at Level 6 (year three) weighting applied x5

Teaching Practices and Learning Resources

Goldsmiths Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy sets out the aim of ensuring that all students are supported to engage in every aspect of Goldsmiths' learning, teaching and assessment. A number of practices and initiatives can be highlighted which enable students to achieve successful outcomes:

Goldsmiths' Teaching and Learning Innovation Centre (TaLIC) supports staff towards the aim of excellence in learning and teaching practice through:

- College-wide pedagogical strategies and policies.
- Technology Enhanced Learning (including Distance Learning).
- Provision of Continuing Professional Development in teaching and learning to staff.
- Regular workshops and discussion sessions.
- Maintaining an open repository of teaching resources including toolkits for Assessment and Feedback and Inclusive Teaching.

In 2020/21, the Accessibility and Inclusion Working Group led work on the development of inclusive educational practice for supporting disabled and black, Asian and ethnic minority students.

A specific focus of the College's Department Development Planning process (DDP), which was initiated in 2019/20, is to address issues of degree attainment and specifically the BAME degree awarding gap. Departments are set longer term targets (currently 2025) via the annual planning round and supported through the DDP process to develop interventions whose effectiveness can be measured on an ongoing basis and modified as required. The process also involves the development of a repository of good practice to be shared across the College.

Document history

Approved by Council, 25 November 2021