# UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

# Degree Outcomes
## STATEMENT REPORT

### 2021-22

# University of Surrey Degree Outcomes Statement 2021

## 1. Degree Classification Profile

Trends in Degree Outcomes

1.1. The University of Surrey's degree outcomes for the period 2015/16 to 2019/20 are summarised in Table 1. These data show that for this period the proportion of 1sts and 2.1s combined (known as Good Honours) at FHEQ level 6 has varied between 79.3% and 84.7%. A notable reduction in the proportion of 1sts and overall Good Honours occurred in 2018/19. The University's regulatory response to the Coronavirus pandemic has contributed to a small upward movement in the proportion of Good Honours in 2019/20. The factors influencing the outcomes shown below are discussed within the rest of the statement.

**Table 1: Summary of University of Surrey degree outcomes 2015/16 to 2019/20**

| Award Year | 2015/16 | | 2016/17 | | 2017/18 | | 2018/19 | | 2019/20 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | 795 | 37.7% | 1,078 | 42.2% | 1,115 | 39.4% | 836 | 29.5% | 946 | 31.8% |
| 2:1 | 932 | 44.2% | 1,088 | 42.6% | 1,262 | 44.6% | 1,410 | 49.8% | 1,467 | 49.3% |
| **Good Honours** | **1727** | **82.0%** | **2166** | **84.7%** | **2377** | **84.1%** | **2246** | **79.3%** | **2413** | **81.1%** |
| 2:2 | 319 | 15.1% | 325 | 12.7% | 386 | 13.6% | 491 | 17.3% | 473 | 15.9% |
| 3rd | 20 | 0.9% | 25 | 1.0% | 22 | 0.8% | 44 | 1.6% | 39 | 1.3% |
| Ordinary | 41 | 1.9% | 40 | 1.6% | 43 | 1.5% | 50 | 1.8% | 52 | 1.7% |
| **Total** | **2107** | **100.0%** | **2556** | **100.0%** | **2828** | **100.0%** | **2831** | **100.0%** | **2977** | **100.0%** |

1.2. The circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic have influenced degree outcomes for 2019/20. Assessment in Semester 2 of the 2019/20 academic year was amended to ensure students could complete their studies as planned. Individuals will have been impacted personally in different ways. The University put in place a set of measures to support students during this period of uncertainty. These measures included a 'safety net' which established baseline student performance for their current academic level based on assessments completed before the pandemic subject to certain thresholds for the purposes of progression and final degree classification.

1.3. The safety net policy was designed to offset the negative impact of the pandemic on student performance. Its design ensured students who were able to perform above their individual safety net baselines retained the higher average mark. The overall effect has been a modest increase in 1sts and Good Honours. As a similar safety net policy is being applied for 2020/21 it is expected that there will be a further increase in Good Honours due to the application of safety nets in both years for students completing their undergraduate awards in 2020/21.

Subject Level

1.4. Figure 1 provides data on degree outcomes for each of the University's three Faculties in the last five years. Changes in the proportion of Good Honours awarded in each Faculty generally see little movement between years with a small number of notable exceptions:

- In 2016/17 Engineering and Physical Sciences saw an increase of 8.6% in the proportion of Good Honours.

- In 2018/19 Arts and Social Sciences saw a 7.3% decrease in the proportion of Good Honours.
- In 2019/20 Arts and Social Sciences saw an increase of 5% and Engineering and Physical Sciences saw a reduction of 5.1% in the proportion of Good Honours.

1.5.    Although they have been reviewed in developing this statement, data at the level of individual departments are more likely to be subject to year on year volatility due to the smaller student numbers being considered.

1.6.    Engineering and Physical Sciences has the smallest number of students graduating at FHEQ level 6. This creates an element of natural variation in the data when making comparisons between years. In addition, the Faculty offers substantial Integrated Master's provision and the outcomes at level 6 are often influenced by the extent to which students achieve the progression requirements to continue to Master's level. When outcomes from Integrated Master's programmes are considered, the variation in degree outcomes between Faculties is much reduced.

1.7.    The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences is the largest Faculty and has grown during the period under review. Having generally had the highest proportion of Good Honours awarded within its programmes, the upward movement in the number of Good Honours largely tracks those of the Faculty. The upward movement in the proportion of Good Honours in 2019/20 at the Faculty level largely accounts for the changes seen across the institution.

**Figure 1: Faculty data on degree outcomes 2015/16 to 2019/20**
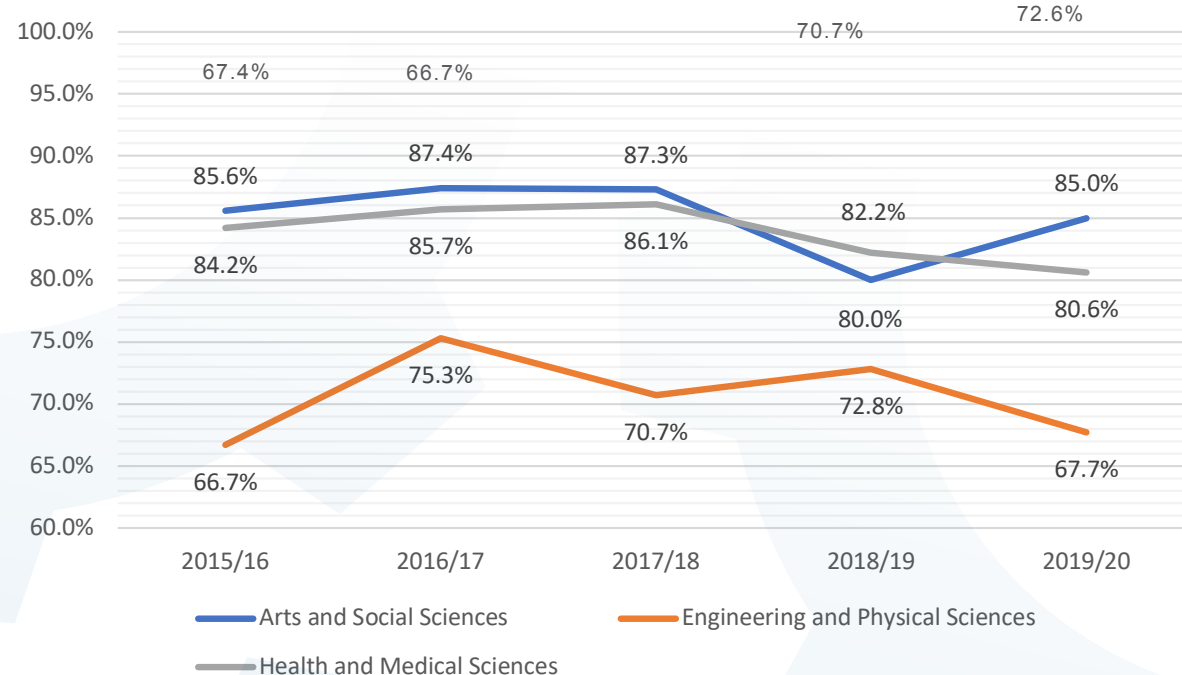


## Student Characteristics

*UCAS Tariff on Entry*

1.8.    Over the review period the average entry tariff of students graduating from Surrey has very gradually reduced as shown in Figure 2 but remains generally strong. The degree outcomes for Surrey students is set against this strong previous academic performance as measured by UCAS Tariff. In Figure 2 UCAS Tariff figures have been normalised against the new UCAS tariff introduced in 2017/18.

**Figure 2: Degree outcomes and average UCAS Tariff of graduating cohort 2015/16 to 2019/20**
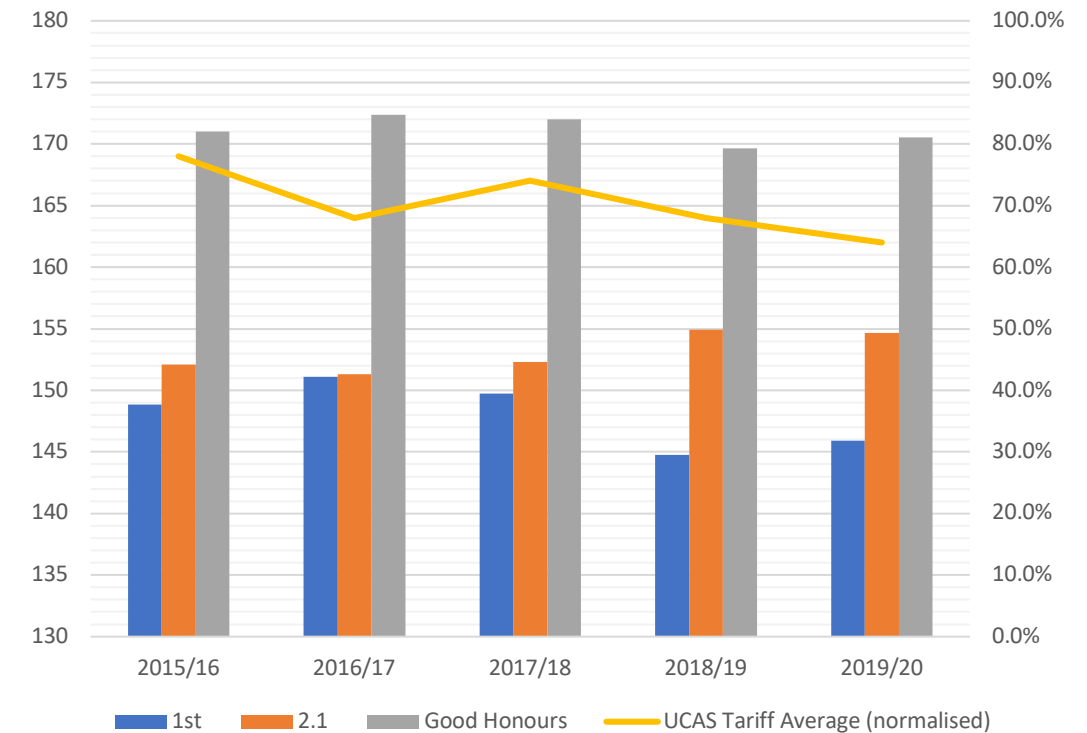


*Low Participation Neighbourhoods*

1.9.    Table 2 shows the difference in degree outcomes between students from the 20% of UK postcodes with the lowest rate of participation in higher education (POLAR4 Quintile 1) with those students from the other postcodes (Quintiles 2-5). The numbers of students are relatively small and show a degree of volatility between years which will kept under review as part of the University's approach to supporting access and participation. However broadly speaking outcomes from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPN) are in line with those from higher participation areas.

**Table 2: Comparison between LPN and Non-LPN degree outcomes (Home domicile)**

| Award Year | 2015/16 | | 2016/17 | | 2017/18 | | 2018/19 | | 2019/20 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| POLAR4 (Q1) | 80 | 87% | 110 | 91% | 120 | 92% | 110 | 83% | 310 | 83% |
| POLAR4 (Q2,3,4,5) | 1040 | 89% | 1380 | 91% | 1520 | 88% | 1420 | 82% | 1610 | 85% |
| Difference | | -2% | | 0% | | 4% | | 1% | | -2% |

*Ethnicity*

1.10.   Table 3 provides an overview of student attainment categorised by student ethnicity. In 2019/20 there was an improvement in the proportion of BAME students achieving a 1st or 2.1 with these improvements greater than those experienced within the White student group. The attainment gap was reduced between the respective groups although further progress is needed to reduce the gaps further. The University's Access and Participation Plan includes a key target to reduce the attainment gap between Black and White students.

**Table 3: Comparison between student group attainment (Home domicile)**

| Award Year | 2015/16 | | 2016/17 | | 2017/18 | | 2018/19 | | 2019/20 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Asian, Mixed and Other Good Honours | 189 | 74.1% | 306 | 78.5% | 342 | 78.4% | 308 | 69.1% | 371 | 73.6% |
| Black Good Honours | 83 | 72.2% | 104 | 77.0% | 90 | 71.4% | 86 | 60.6% | 96 | 69.6% |
| White Good Honours | 974 | 89.4% | 1206 | 90.1% | 1288 | 89.6% | 1178 | 85.7% | 1424 | 86.6% |
| Difference (Asian and Mixed vs White) | | -15.2% | | -11.6% | | -11.1% | | -16.6% | | -13.0% |
| Difference (Black vs White) | | -17.2% | | -13.0% | | -18.1% | | -25.1% | | -17.0% |

## Mature Students

1.11. Table 4 shows that the attainment gap between Home Mature and Young students had reduced considerably between 2014/15 and 2018/19 but widened again in 2019/20. The proportion of Mature students achieving Good Honours reduced slightly with the gap widening primarily due to improved performance from Young students. This may indicate variable impacts of the pandemic on particular groups of students.

**Table 4: Comparison between Mature and Young student attainment (Home domicile)**

| Award Year | 2015/16 | | 2016/17 | | 2017/18 | | 2018/19 | | 2019/20 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mature Good Honours | 322 | 81.1% | 315 | 82.0% | 347 | 83.2% | 309 | 79.4% | 286 | 78.1% |
| Young Good Honours | 928 | 86.8% | 1304 | 87.9% | 1380 | 86.7% | 1275 | 80.1% | 1433 | 83.1% |
| Difference | | -5.7% | | -5.9% | | -3.5% | | -0.7% | | -5.0% |

## Disability

1.12. Table 5 shows a comparison in the degree outcomes of Home domiciled disabled and non-disabled students. Disabled students are a relatively small part of the undergraduate population. Since 2016/17, degree outcomes for disabled students have been broadly in line with those of the wider student population and although the gap widened in both 2018/19 and 2019/20. A higher proportion of disabled students achieved Good Honours in 2019/20, although a larger increase for non-disabled students resulted in a widened gap.

**Table 5: Comparison between Disabled and non-disabled student attainment (Home domicile)**

| Award Year | 2015/16 | | 2016/17 | | 2017/18 | | 2018/19 | | 2019/20 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disabled Good Honours | 35 | 74.5% | 62 | 86.1% | 72 | 86.7% | 83 | 77.6% | 122 | 78.2% |
| No disability Good Honours | 1215 | 85.6% | 1557 | 86.7% | 1655 | 86.0% | 1501 | 80.2% | 1597 | 82.5% |
| Difference | | -11.2% | | -0.6% | | 0.7% | | -2.6% | | -4.3% |

## Gender

1.13. Table 6 provides a gender comparison in degree outcomes. As is the case across the sector, male students perform less well as a group than female students. The gap has varied considerably between academic years.

**Table 6: Comparison of degree outcomes by gender (all domiciles)**

| Award Year | 2015/16 | | 2016/17 | | 2017/18 | | 2018/19 | | 2019/20 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female Good Honours | 1106 | 86.2% | 1331 | 86.8% | 1423 | 86.8% | 1395 | 84.6% | 1416 | 84.2% |
| Male Good Honours | 621 | 75.4% | 835 | 81.7% | 952 | 80.3% | 852 | 72.0% | 996 | 76.9% |
| Difference | | 10.8% | | 5.1% | | 6.5% | | 12.6% | | 7.3% |

# 2. Assessment and Marking Practices

2.1. The Quality Framework for the University of Surrey consists of several elements, all designed to deliver academic programmes of a high academic standard and a high-quality student learning experience. The Framework ensures alignment to sector standards and assurance of the effectiveness of these policies and procedures is maintained through regular monitoring, review and reporting. Oversight is provided through the academic governance structures at Faculty and University levels, reporting ultimately to the University Senate and University Council.

2.2. Surrey's Code of Practice for Programme Lifecycle Processes provides an approach that ensures alignment of the University's programmes against sector recognised standards including the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), subject benchmark statements and the requirements of individual Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). Alignment with these reference points is confirmed through the validation process which includes external academic advice as well as a student perspective to facilitate an objective assessment of learning outcomes, assessment criteria and assessment methods.

2.3. The University has policies and procedures in place relating to assessment and marking practices, confirming expectations for both staff and students:

- The Code of Practice for Assessment and Feedback outlines how marks are to be agreed and moderated as well as the process through which Boards of Studies can agree adjustment of marks applied to individuals or cohorts. The Code of Practice also includes the University's grade descriptors that are applied across the institution and aligned with the FHEQ.
- The Regulations for Extenuating Circumstances set out the grounds on which students can seek recognition of their circumstances and the process through which these are considered.
- The Regulations for Academic Appeals set out the decisions and outcomes a student can appeal and the grounds on which appeals can be made.

2.4. All taught programmes have one or more external examiners who are appointed according to set criteria and ratified by the Senate Progression and Conferment Executive (SPACE). External examiners follow the Code of Practice for External Examining: Taught Programmes. The University makes full and active use of the input of external examiners to maintain its academic standards and enhance programme content and delivery. External examiners are asked to identify areas of strength for dissemination and recommendations for enhancement of the programme.

2.5. External examiners are asked to report formally on whether the University is maintaining academic standards in accordance with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and relevant subject benchmark statements and whether student performance is aligned to that of other comparable programmes. External examiners are also asked to confirm the appropriateness of assessment methods and the application of marking criteria and the adherence to regulations (Code of Practice for Assessment and Feedback). Reports are considered by Boards of Studies at which student representatives are present and a response is then made to the external examiner. Students have full access to the external examiner reports relevant to their programme.

2.6. For a number of years the University's Code of Practice for Assessment and Feedback has included grade descriptors intended to be used as a tool throughout the assessment process (in assessment design, marking/grading, moderation, and

feedback) for any assessment set at undergraduate level. During the 2018/19 academic year a review of the grade descriptors was undertaken with final versions approved at the end of the academic year. The new descriptors improved the clarity of language and provided a greater sense of differentiation between academic levels. In addition, three new models for mark adjustment were introduced in 2018/19 to ensure that checks and balances set out within the Code of Practice can be applied appropriately. These include the use of appropriate and approved methods for 'scaling' (adjusting) mark distributions where these are anomalous for one reason or another. In combination with the assurance processes described above this ongoing internal calibration has contributed to a reduction in the proportion of Good Honours during 2018/19 as shown in Table 1.

## 3.    Academic Governance

3.1.    The University of Surrey has a clearly defined Code of Practice for Academic Governance. The purpose of the Code is to define the structures, policies and processes that the University has put in place to assure the setting and maintaining of academic standards and the quality of the student experience.

3.2.    The University Council is the ultimate governing body with Senate the governing body for all academic matters. Senate is assisted in its task by various key committees, which include the University Education Committee (UEC), the University Research and Innovation Committee (URIC) and their sub-committees. UEC's primary responsibility is to maintain and improve the University's academic standards and support the delivery of a positive student experience. This includes reviewing and monitoring the quality of academic standards against key performance indicators and determining any necessary interventions.

3.3.    The Senate Progression and Conferment Executive (SPACE) is a sub-committee of Senate. All degrees and other awards are conferred by SPACE acting on delegated authority from Senate. SPACE reviews the recommendations made from Boards of Examiners for consistency and reasonableness before ratification and conferment of awards. SPACE has the authority to make appropriate changes to overall marks and degree classifications on behalf of Senate where required and in line with the Code of Practice for Assessment and Feedback.

3.4.    Decisions regarding the award of academic credit are made by Boards of Examiners which review assessment outcomes and the underlying marking and moderation processes underpinning the University's academic standards. Boards of Examiners routinely include input from external examiners to ensure appropriate external verification of assessment outcomes.

3.5.    Working within the framework described above, the University has an established and clearly articulated quality governance structure for the approval and management of collaborative provision, which resides under the authority of the Senate. The Academic Registry is responsible for the appointment of moderators and external examiners for all validated programmes at Associated and Accredited Institutions (AIs) and manages the annual, periodic and institutional review processes for its AIs to identify good practice, address any concerns or issues, evaluate the health and management of the programme as well as the Institution overall.

## 4.    Classification Algorithms

4.1.    The University's degree classification algorithm is communicated transparently through published regulations and are typically applicable from the year a student enters their programme of study. Since the academic year 2010/11 the University's core algorithm used to calculate undergraduate degree classifications has remained unchanged, with a 35%/65% split between FHEQ level 5 and FHEQ level 6 for Bachelor's programmes. These weightings reflect the University's view that a student's degree classification should be primarily determined by their performance at the later and higher levels within their award while recognising achievements earlier in the programme of study.
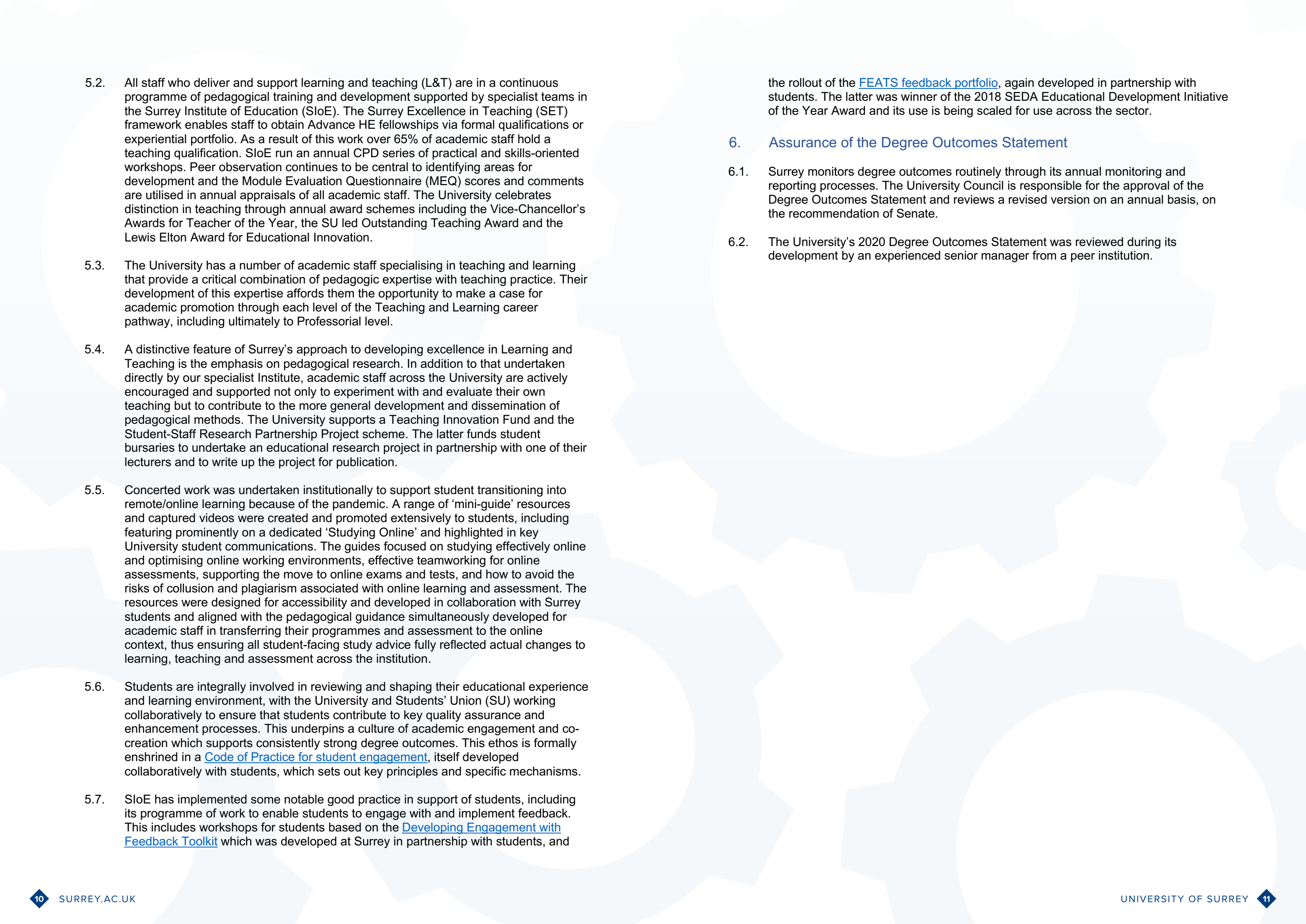
4.2.    Awards are graded by taking the overall eligible marks, weighting them in accordance with the credit value of each module and using the average to determine the final grade. Final awards are made for undergraduate programmes within the identified ranges below.

| | |
|---|---|
| First Class | 70% and above |
| Second Class, Upper Division | 60-69% |
| Second Class, Lower Division | 50-59% |
| Third Class | 40-49% |

4.3.    The regulations are designed so that the award grade directly reflects the weighted aggregate mark, as the best indicator of student achievement. The University does not have a 'borderline range' (also known as a 'zone of consideration') enabling the award of a higher classification than that achieved through the weighted aggregate mark alone. The University also does not allow discounting of credit in calculating the final degree classification.

4.4.    Compensation is available following a failure at the first attempt for units of assessment in modules with a value up to and including 30 credits at FHEQ level 4. In subsequent years, compensation is available for modules with a value up to and including 15 credits. For compensation to be applied in a normal undergraduate programme, students must have achieved at least 30% in the module and have a weighted average for the level of at least 45%. The University's response to the Coronavirus pandemic included an emergency regulation to extend the availability of compensation to 30 credits for FHEQ levels 5 and 6 of an undergraduate degree. This temporary arrangement will be in force for the 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years.

4.5.    Although no changes have been made to the core algorithm for a significant period, amendments to the academic regulations have been made affecting parts of Surrey's provision. From the 2014/15 academic year, marks from the Professional Training Year were no longer included as part of the degree classification algorithm, having previously been given a 10% weighting. Retrospective analysis confirms that this change had little impact on the distribution of degrees awarded.

## 5.    Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and Good Practice

5.1.    Surrey maintains an institutional focus on maximising student attainment by improving the quality of student-centred learning and teaching, including investment in facilities and resources, support for staff delivering teaching and learning and an embedded approach to student engagement.

5.2. All staff who deliver and support learning and teaching (L&T) are in a continuous programme of pedagogical training and development supported by specialist teams in the Surrey Institute of Education (SIoE). The Surrey Excellence in Teaching (SET) framework enables staff to obtain Advance HE fellowships via formal qualifications or experiential portfolio. As a result of this work over 65% of academic staff hold a teaching qualification. SIoE run an annual CPD series of practical and skills-oriented workshops. Peer observation continues to be central to identifying areas for development and the Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ) scores and comments are utilised in annual appraisals of all academic staff. The University celebrates distinction in teaching through annual award schemes including the Vice-Chancellor's Awards for Teacher of the Year, the SU led Outstanding Teaching Award and the Lewis Elton Award for Educational Innovation.

5.3. The University has a number of academic staff specialising in teaching and learning that provide a critical combination of pedagogic expertise with teaching practice. Their development of this expertise affords them the opportunity to make a case for academic promotion through each level of the Teaching and Learning career pathway, including ultimately to Professorial level.

5.4. A distinctive feature of Surrey's approach to developing excellence in Learning and Teaching is the emphasis on pedagogical research. In addition to that undertaken directly by our specialist Institute, academic staff across the University are actively encouraged and supported not only to experiment with and evaluate their own teaching but to contribute to the more general development and dissemination of pedagogical methods. The University supports a Teaching Innovation Fund and the Student-Staff Research Partnership Project scheme. The latter funds student bursaries to undertake an educational research project in partnership with one of their lecturers and to write up the project for publication.

5.5. Concerted work was undertaken institutionally to support student transitioning into remote/online learning because of the pandemic. A range of 'mini-guide' resources and captured videos were created and promoted extensively to students, including featuring prominently on a dedicated 'Studying Online' and highlighted in key University student communications. The guides focused on studying effectively online and optimising online working environments, effective teamworking for online assessments, supporting the move to online exams and tests, and how to avoid the risks of collusion and plagiarism associated with online learning and assessment. The resources were designed for accessibility and developed in collaboration with Surrey students and aligned with the pedagogical guidance simultaneously developed for academic staff in transferring their programmes and assessment to the online context, thus ensuring all student-facing study advice fully reflected actual changes to learning, teaching and assessment across the institution.

5.6. Students are integrally involved in reviewing and shaping their educational experience and learning environment, with the University and Students' Union (SU) working collaboratively to ensure that students contribute to key quality assurance and enhancement processes. This underpins a culture of academic engagement and co-creation which supports consistently strong degree outcomes. This ethos is formally enshrined in a Code of Practice for student engagement, itself developed collaboratively with students, which sets out key principles and specific mechanisms.

5.7. SIoE has implemented some notable good practice in support of students, including its programme of work to enable students to engage with and implement feedback. This includes workshops for students based on the Developing Engagement with Feedback Toolkit which was developed at Surrey in partnership with students, and

the rollout of the FEATS feedback portfolio, again developed in partnership with students. The latter was winner of the 2018 SEDA Educational Development Initiative of the Year Award and its use is being scaled for use across the sector.

6. Assurance of the Degree Outcomes Statement

6.1. Surrey monitors degree outcomes routinely through its annual monitoring and reporting processes. The University Council is responsible for the approval of the Degree Outcomes Statement and reviews a revised version on an annual basis, on the recommendation of Senate.

6.2. The University's 2020 Degree Outcomes Statement was reviewed during its development by an experienced senior manager from a peer institution.

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