

Plymouth Marjon University

Degree Outcome Statement

Institutional Degree Classification Profile

Overall trends

The trends for degree classifications at Plymouth Marjon University between 2017/18 and 2021/22 are presented below:

- An overall decrease in good degrees (a first class or an upper second class classification) of 1.1% (from 77.6% to 76.5%). There was a decrease of 3.3% between 2020/21 and 2021/22.
- An increase in first class degrees awarded to students, with this increasing by 7.7% from 25.3% in 2017/18 to 33% in 2021/22. The number of upper second class degrees awarded have decreased over the five year period by 8.7%. While the number of lower second class have decreased by 1.5% the number of third class degrees awarded have increased by 2.7% (increase of 1.9% on 2020/21 figures). The number of good degrees are almost in line with pre-pandemic levels (currently 2.4% higher) following the slight increase in 2019-20 due to the application of the University's Safety Net Policy. It is anticipated that this trend will continue during 2022/23.
- The increases and decreases in first class and good degrees mirrors the trends across the sector, with increases during the pandemic years (2019/20 and 2020/21) and decrease in the subsequent year. Over the five year period the number of first class degrees awarded have been consistently below sector apart from 2021/22. This is the reverse for good degrees where the University was below sector consistently apart from 2017/18 and roughly below by 3% for three of those five years.
- When comparing results for taught students versus collaborative partner students, the percentage of first class and good degrees was much higher for students studying via our collaborative partners. The percentage of partner students receiving a first class increased from 23.4% to 34.9% (increase of 11.5%) compared to the percentage of taught students receiving a first class which increased from 26% to 32.1% (increase of 6.1%). This compares to the sector at 32.3% for 2021/22. The percentage of partner students receiving a good degree increased from 76.6% to 79.3% whereas the percentage of home students receiving a good degree decreased from 77.9% to 75.3%. This compares to the sector at 78.8%. The student body is predominately taught, however 30% of students completing in 2021/22 were collaborative partner students (24.6 in 2017/18).

- The University is committed to ensuring that the value of its degrees over time is protected and there are robust quality assurance and academic governance processes in place to ensure this.
- The average entry tariff for the University has also shown movement over the five year period with average entry tariff higher than the sector average for the fourth consecutive year (98.9 compared to the sector at 81.2) and therefore potentially positively influencing the number of students receiving a good degree. Average entry tariff has been impacted by our professional programmes and therefore it will be useful to undertake further analysis to review good degrees at programme / subject area against average entry criteria on the five year period.

Table 1: Degree classification profiles for Level 6 degree programmes at Plymouth Marjon University between 2017/18 and 2021/22

Year of Award	Total Awards	First Class	Upper Second Class	Lower Second Class	Third Class
2017/18	557	25.3%	52.2%	20.6%	1.8%
2018/19	576	27.1%	47.0%	23.3%	2.6%
2019/20	596	31.7%	49.3%	17.1%	1.8%
2020/21	614	33.1%	46.7%	17.6%	2.6%
2021/22	561	33.0%	43.5%	19.1%	4.5%

Chart 1: Degree classification profiles for Level 6 degree programmes at Plymouth Marjon University between 2017/18 and 2021/22

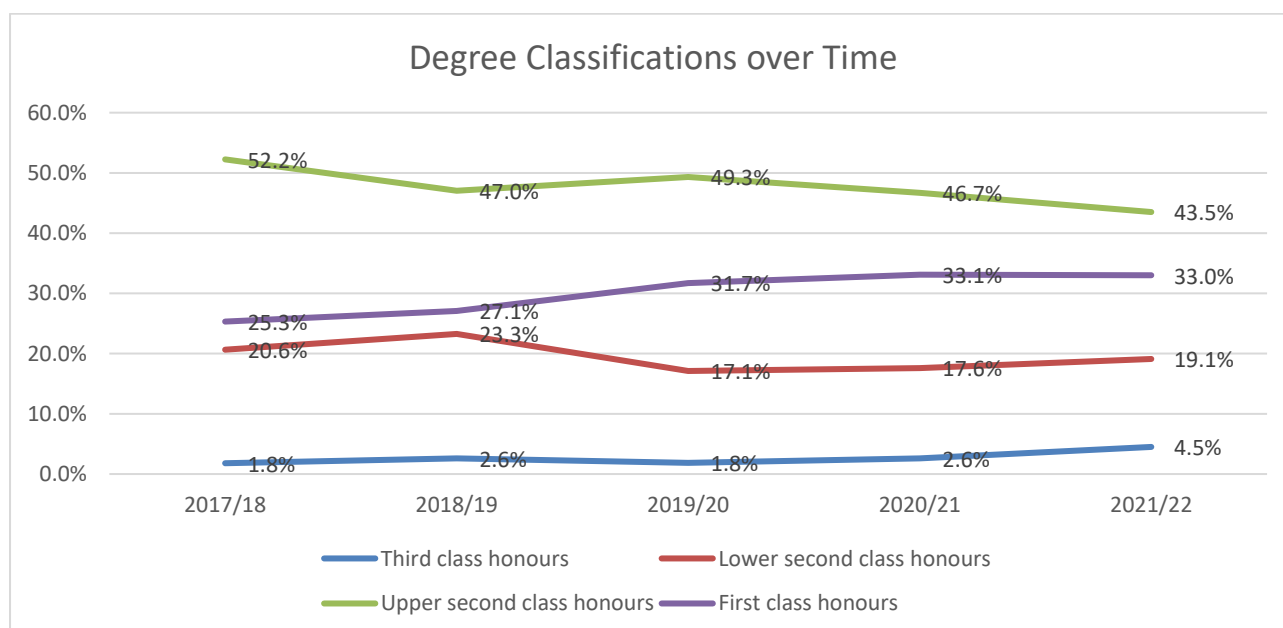
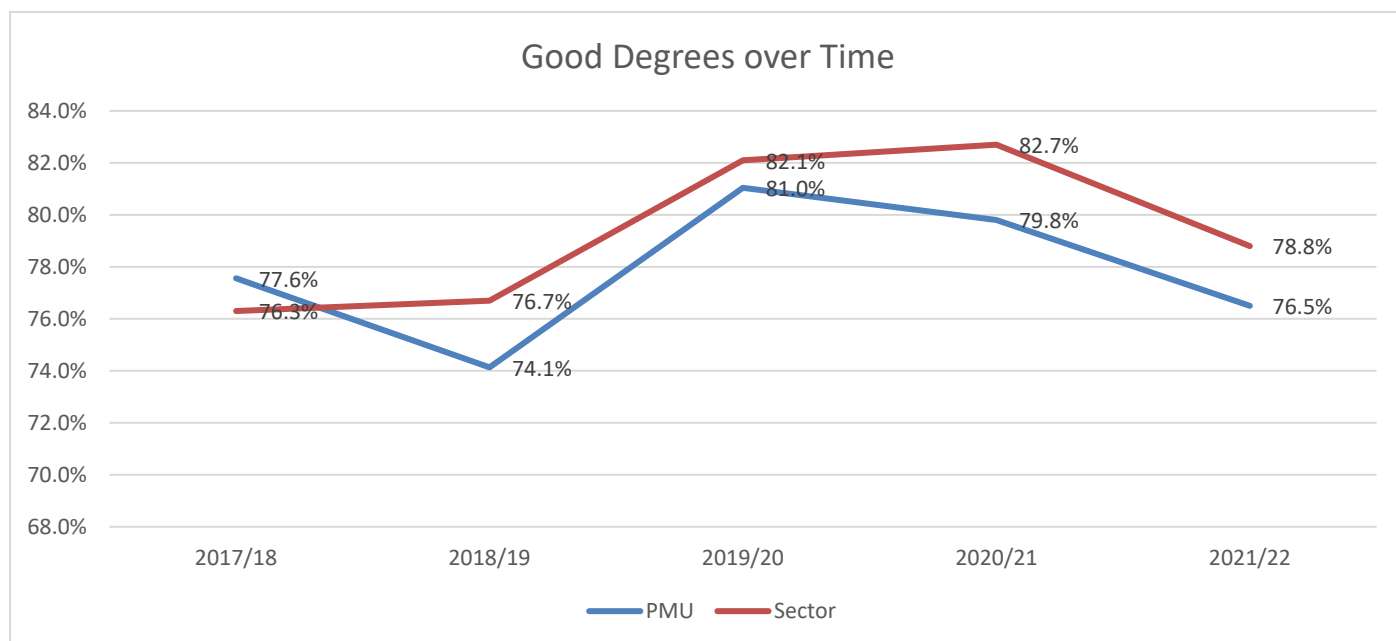


Chart 2: Good degrees profile for Level 6 degree programmes at Plymouth Marjon University between 2017/18 and 2021/22.



Students Characteristics

An analysis of student characteristics follows, additional information can be found in the appendix.

Gender

- The percentage of males over the five year period receiving a first class increased from 21.2% to 28.9%. An increase of 7.7% and an increase of 2.1% on previous year.
- The percentage of females over the five year period receiving a first class increased from 29% to 37%. An increase of 8% and a decrease of 2.3% on previous year.
- The percentage of males awarded a good degree (first class or upper second) increased from 72.7% to 73.6%. An increase of 0.9% and a decrease of 0.6% on previous year.
- The percentage of females awarded a good degree (first class or upper second) decreased from 81.9% to 79.4% a decrease of 2.5% and a decrease of 5.9% on previous year.
- Females are consistently more likely to be awarded a first or good degree than male students. However, the gap in attainment for 2021/22 (5.8%) was the lowest over the five year period and significantly lower than the previous two years (11.1% 2020/21 and 9.2% 2019/20). This is mainly down to partner provision where the majority of students (83% during 2021/22) were male and where good degrees are higher (partner 79.3% vs home provision at 75.3%)

Age

- The percentage of students under 21 at the start of their programme receiving a first class increased from 21.1% to 27.2% over the five year period. An increase of 6.1%, this is a decrease of 3.5% on the previous year.
- The percentage of students over 21 at the start of their programme receiving a first class increased from 31.2% to 42.5% over the five year period. An increase of 11.3% and an increase of 5.8% on the previous year.
- The percentage of students under 21 at the start of their programme receiving a good degree (first class or upper second class) decreased by 3.2% from 77.1% in 2017/18 to 73.9% in 2021/22. A decrease of 5.8% from 2020/21.
- The percentage of students over 21 at the start of their programme receiving a good degree (first class or upper second class) increased by 2.5% from 78.2% in 2017/18 to 80.7% in 2021/22. An increase of 0.7% on 2020/21 figures.
- Mature students are consistently more likely to receive a first or a good degree than those students under 21 at the start of their course. For 2021/22 the attainment gap currently sits at 6.7%.

Disability

- The percentage of students with a declared disability receiving a first class increased by 11.4% over the five year period from 17.1% to 28.5%. A decrease of 1.9% on 2020/21 figures.
- The percentage of students with no declared disability receiving a first class increased by 6.4% over the five year period from 28.2% to 34.6%. An increase of 0.7% on 2020/21 figures.
- The percentage of students with a declared disability receiving a good degree (first class or upper second class) increased by 6.3% over the five year period from 71.2% to 77.5%. A decrease of 1.6% on 2020/21 figures.
- The percentage of students with no declared disability receiving a good degree (first class or upper second class) decreased by 3.7% over the five year period from 79.8% to 76.1%. A decrease of 3.9% on 2020/21 figures.
- Over the five year period students with no declared disability were more likely to receive a first or good degree. However, for the first time in the five year period those with a declared disability in 2021/22 were more likely to receive a good degree (77.5% vs 76.1%).

Ethnicity

- The percentage of students identifying as 'other ethnic group' receiving a first class increased by 17.5% over the five year period from 8% to 25.5%. A decrease of 8.5% on previous year.
- The percentage of students identifying as 'white' receiving a first class increased by 7.6% over the five year period from 26.1% to 33.7%. An increase of 0.7% on previous year.
- The percentage of students identifying as 'other ethnic group' receiving a good degree (first class or upper second class) decreased by 2% over the five year period from 68% to 66%. A decrease of 12.7% on previous year.
- The percentage of students identifying as 'white' receiving a good degree (first class or upper second class) decreased by 0.6% over the five year period from 78% to 77.4%. A decrease of 2.5% on previous year.
- Students identifying as white are more likely to receive a first or good degree with attainment gap for good degrees increasing to 11.4% from 1.2% in 2020/21. However only 47 of the students included identified as 'other ethnic group'.

Assessment and Marking Practices

The University ensures that both student academic experience and student outcomes are central to the design, approval, and delivery of the University's programmes. Programme design and approval processes align to the requirements of the UK Quality Code, the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and to relevant professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements (where applicable) ensuring that all new programmes are of a high quality. Programme approval and reapproval include externality in the form of an External Panel Member. The panel scrutinise learning outcomes at programme and module level and fully review the assessment strategy of the programme to ensure that students can achieve the learning outcomes.

The University provides generic grade and level descriptors to ensure a consistency within marking practices, the use of a generic marking framework and internal verification template ensures that Module Leaders are consistent in the way they mark. This template is adapted per module and saved to the relevant module page on the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) so that students are clear on how they are being assessed.

Unless a particular module has approval by the University's Senate not to align all assessment at Level 5 and above is marked anonymously. Double marking is used by the University to ensure the accuracy and consistency of marking and to verify marks. A sample reflecting the range of marks and classifications enables the two markers to ensure that they are marking consistently and accurately against assessment criteria and grade descriptors. Following this rigorous moderation takes place within each programme and module team.

In addition to internal double marking and moderation all student summative assessment is subject to sampling by the appointed External Examiner. The University's External Examiners play a critical role in providing assurance about the reliability of degree standards, through confirming that the standards of the awards made are appropriate and reflect sector expectations.

Following the University's 2016 National Student Survey (NSS) results, from which Assessment and Feedback were identified as requiring attention and improvement, an internal project was established to review assessment and feedback practices. The aim of the project was to establish benchmarks for good practice and to address any issues. This project resulted in a more consistent University wide approach to assessment and marking.

One outcome from this project was the change to marking practices. The use of grade points was introduced for all assessment apart from those with an 'absolute' answer. Equating to pass, low, medium, and high where pass (0) aligns to threshold, they were introduced to enhance clarity and consistency across the marking process. In addition to this the University introduced a 'hanging nine' for module marks where a mark of nine would automatically be rounded up.

During this period the University also developed Generic Grade Descriptors, which inform assessment across its programmes in a non-prescriptive manner. The Descriptors focus on the development of knowledge and understanding, and intellectual skills and academic staff have been encouraged to mark across the full range of grades. The addition of enhanced feedback mechanisms with an emphasis on feed-forward ensure that students are aware of why a particular mark has been given and allows them to continually improve.

The Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic participated in the pilot for the Advance HE Professional Development for External Examiners and has completed the 'develop the developer' training. The University during 2021-22 continued to offer the Advance HE Professional Development Course to its staff,

its collaborative partner staff and to its External Examiners, with the intention for a University bespoke training course to be developed and offered to all staff and External Examiners to ensure that the good practice identified within the Good Degrees Project continues to be embedded within the University. In addition to this, all new academic staff complete the PG Cert in Academic Practice¹ or obtain appropriate Higher Education Academy Fellowship via another route as a condition of their employment and as part of their induction. The PG Cert Academic Practice is also open for collaborative partner staff to attend, this facilitates their route to Higher Education Academy Fellowship and provides a standardised route to the training of both University and partner staff.

Academic Governance

The University has a clear and robust academic governance structure, which applies to both home and collaborative partner provision. The ultimate responsibility for assuring the value of awards over time sits with the University's Senate which reports to the University's Board of Governors. An Annual Assurance Report is submitted to the Board of Governors in November which provides a detailed overview of the University's Quality Assurance Framework and alignment to the Quality Code and OfS Conditions. This report provides assurance to the University's Board of Governors that academic standards and quality are being maintained. An internal audit completed during 2021/22 by PWC awarded a low risk rating to the University in relation to academic quality.

All new academic partnerships and programme approvals and reapprovals are approved by Senate. The University Board of Studies (UBoS) has delegated authority for the management of the University's quality assurance and regulatory frameworks and the maintenance of academic standards and quality of awards. The University's Quality Cycle, including annual monitoring, is embedded within the business of the committee. External Examiners are appointed by the University Board of Studies, by delegated authority on behalf of Senate. The University Board of Studies is also responsible, on behalf of and in consultation as appropriate with Senate, for the University's External Examination and Moderation functions as a whole.

The University has a two tier assessment system consisting of the Module Assessment Board (MAB) and Progression and Awards Board (PAB). The MAB, confirms marks and awards credit at module level subject to the achievement of the learning outcomes of those modules. The PAB, makes decisions relating to the progression of students in programmes and the consequence of failure at any stage of a programme. They

¹ Previously the PG Cert in Learning and Teaching in HE. This has been revalidated and reaccredited during 2021-22 with the title changing to PG Cert Academic Practice

also make recommendations for the conferment and classification of awards to Senate. Senate delegates the responsibility for approving the PAB outcomes to the University Secretary and Registrar in his role as secretary to Senate.

The University has established two distinct roles for External Examiners. The first is in relation to the duties of the MAB; the second is in relation to the duties of the PAB. Both the MAB and PAB External Examiners, through the annual reporting process, confirm that the University awards are sector consistent raising issues where applicable. The University responds to all External Examiner reports at both programme and Institutional level. Themes from these reports are discussed at the University Board of Studies and Senate with actions for enhancement identified.

All programmes are reviewed annually through the annual monitoring process. Student achievement, graduate achievement, the results of student feedback, feedback from External Examiners and professional body representatives and the expectations placed on the University by the UK Quality Code all inform this process. Discussion of student outcomes are included in this process and in addition are reported monthly to the University Board of Studies. This allows regular updates to be provided within the University and to the Board of Governors.

Classification Algorithms

The classification algorithm for all undergraduate students is made available and published on the University's website via the Student Regulations Framework. All marks at Level 5 and Level 6 are considered with the emphasis placed at Level 6. The algorithm was changed in 2013/14 to reflect sector practice and to place an increased emphasis on 'exit velocity' where the algorithm places greater weight on the final year. This reflects the expectation that as students' progress through the levels of their programme, their study becomes more difficult. Level 4 marks are only included in the University's algorithm for Foundation Degrees, where the best 60 credits are included. The description of the classification can be found [here](#).

During 2019-20 and as a response to the pandemic the University introduced a safety net policy to ensure that students were not disadvantaged. This meant that as long as students successfully achieved credit the end result for the year would not be negatively impacted and results would not go down. This was in line with the sector response to the pandemic. However, the University can be confident that there was no impact on the standard of the award as all Learning Outcomes continued to be met.

The University is committed to maintaining pre-pandemic degree classification levels in line with government expectations. All aspects of the safety net policy, where the main focus was extended condonement rather than algorithmic change, no longer applies. The University reverted to pre-pandemic grading during 2021-22.

Teaching Practices and Learning Resources

The University continually strives to enhance learning and teaching, and this can be seen from the positive increases in the NSS during this five year period. The focus on assessment and feedback during 2016-17 resulted in the development of marking frameworks which reinforced the University's grade descriptors. This in turn has highlighted for students the importance of applying their knowledge when completing assessment. This increased application of knowledge by students has contributed to the increase in good degrees.

The University continues to review its Curriculum Model to ensure the best experience for students. During 2015-16 all existing provision was reviewed to include a work-based learning / placement module at Level 5 and to incorporate a generic module at Level 4 which incorporated academic, personal, social and professional development linked to digital scholarship, global citizenship, employability and academic skills. Due to staff and student feedback during 2016-17 the compulsory nature of the Level 4 module was removed from September 2017 onwards, however this was contingent on programme teams ensuring that the elements of the module were embedded within the programme at Level 4. To assist with this the Personal Development Tutor (PDT) system was revised that same year to ensure a renewed focus on personalised, holistic, and empowering personal support for students which was to introduce a focus on development, coaching and mentoring as well as pastoral support. In addition to an enhanced PDT system the Curriculum Model requires Programme Teams to build into all levels of the programme spines of research, employability, and leadership, with a requirement at validation to provide a detailed breakdown of how these skills are embedded. A further change in 2019-20 to include an immersive module during the first semester at level 4 has resulted in improved retention figures and enhanced student satisfaction.

The University's focus on continual enhancement is fully embedded within the [Learning and Teaching Strategy](#) and the University's Quality Assurance Framework. All new academic staff are required to complete the PG Certificate in Academic Practice, which is accredited by Advance HE, or complete another route to accreditation as appropriate to their experience and existing teaching qualifications. Those who

complete the PGCert in Academic Practice also receive Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). Staff are encouraged to achieve further professional recognition (SFHEA and PFHEA) with this supported through the Academic Promotion and Career Development Procedure. CPD opportunities are focussed around the enhancement of learning and teaching in line with the University's values and Learning and Teaching Strategy. This increased focus on staff development has enhanced pedagogical practices and has placed an increased recognition of professionalism in learning and teaching.

Annual monitoring processes continue to be enhanced by the University. An increased emphasis on the use of University wide data broken down at student characteristic level allows programme teams to fully review programmes providing robust action planning. The University will ensure that degree outcomes at student characteristic level will continue to be discussed within programme and school reports.

Actions

The University plans to review its Degree Outcomes Statement on an annual basis with any risks and challenges identified and actions to mitigate these discussed via our internal processes.

Actions to be considered for 2023-24 include:

1. Continue to engage and respond to the Degrees Standard Project.
2. Review Internal Moderation processes and procedures, standardising across Academic Schools providing increased internal calibration activities and opportunities for annual training in line with the good practice identified within the Degree Standards Project and Develop the Developer programme.
3. Consider extended External Examiner induction / annual training to facilitate the sharing of best practice.
4. Continue to involve students in conversations regarding degree classifications and outcomes via the Student Engagement and Outcomes Panel.
5. Review average entry tariff against degree outcomes for professional programmes to ascertain whether increase in entry tariff has resulted in increased good degrees.
6. Review degree outcome trends for collaborative partner provision for discussion at annual Strategic Partnership Boards.

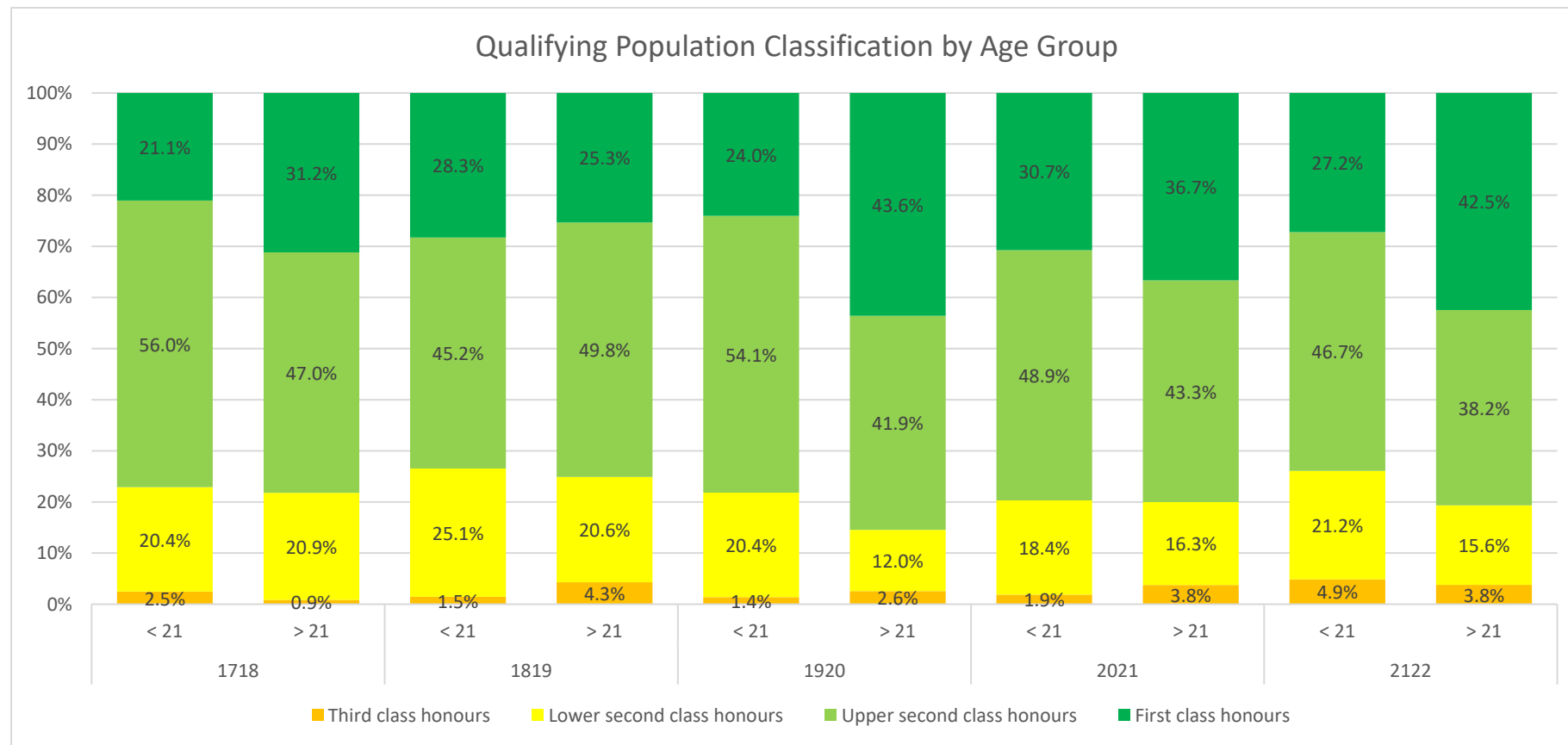
Appendix

Student Characteristics: Age

Table 2: Degree classification profiles for Level 6 degree programmes at Plymouth Marjon University between 2017/18 and 2021/22 by Age

Student Characteristic	Year	Value	Total Awards	Third Class	Lower Second Class	Upper Second Class	First Class	Good Degrees
Age	2017/18	Total	557	1.8%	20.6%	52.2%	25.3%	77.6%
		Under 21	323	2.5%	20.4%	56.0%	21.1%	77.1%
		21 and over	234	0.9%	20.9%	47.0%	31.2%	78.2%
	2018/19	Total	576	2.6%	23.3%	47.0%	27.1%	74.1%
		Under 21	343	1.5%	25.1%	45.2%	28.3%	73.5%
		21 and over	233	4.3%	20.6%	49.8%	25.3%	75.1%
	2019/20	Total	596	1.8%	17.1%	49.3%	31.7%	81.0%
		Under 21	361	1.4%	20.5%	54.0%	24.1%	78.1%
		21 and over	235	2.6%	11.9%	42.1%	43.4%	85.5%
	2020/21	Total	614	2.6%	17.6%	46.7%	33.1%	79.8%
		Under 21	374	1.9%	18.4%	48.9%	30.7%	79.7%
		21 and over	240	3.8%	16.3%	43.3%	36.7%	80.0%
	2021/22	Total	561	4.5%	19.1%	43.5%	33.0%	76.5%
		Under 21	349	4.9%	21.2%	46.7%	27.2%	73.9%
		21 and over	212	3.8%	15.6%	38.2%	42.5%	80.7%

Chart 3: Degree classification profiles for Level 6 degree programmes at Plymouth Marjon University between 2017/18 and 2021/22 by Age

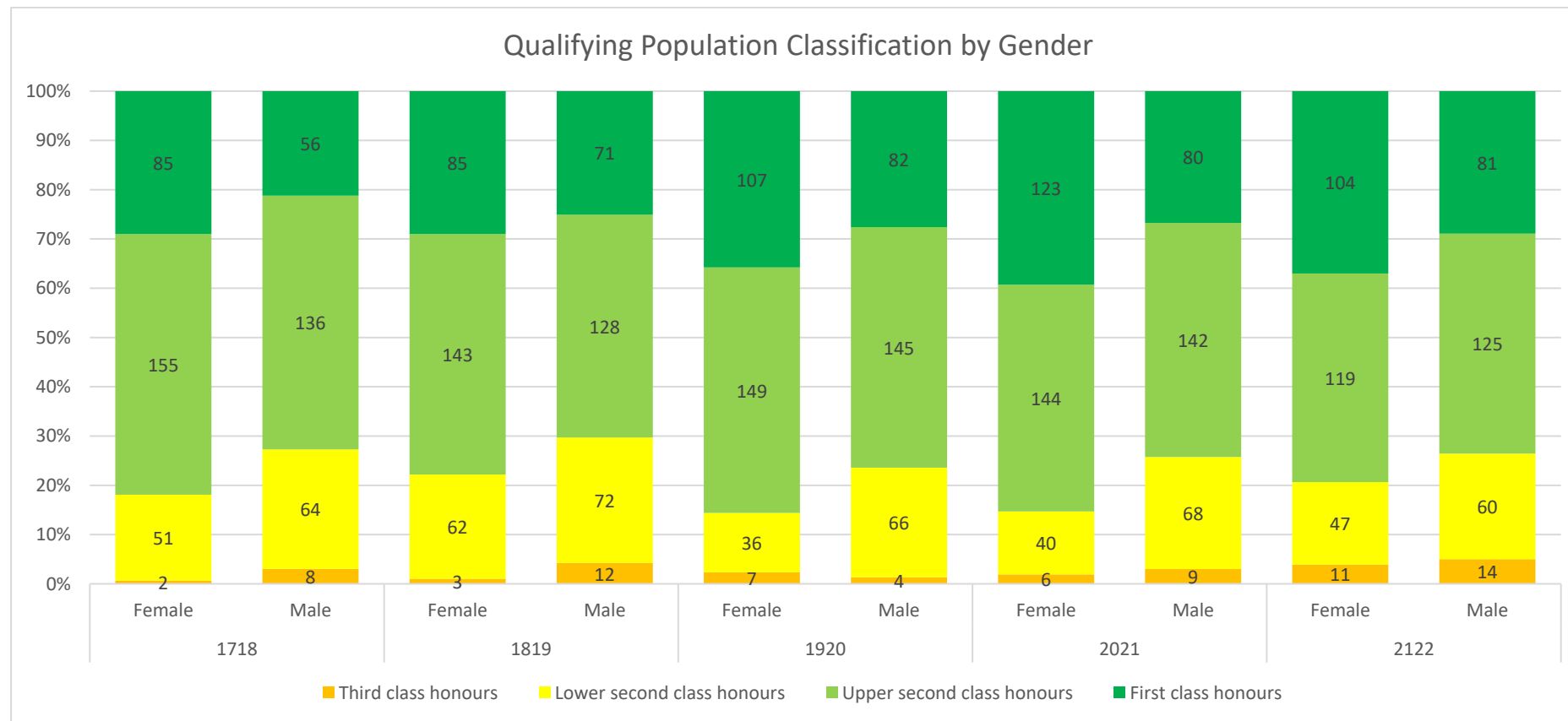


Student Characteristics: Gender

Table 3: Degree classification profiles for Level 6 degree programmes at Plymouth Marjon University between 2017/18 and 2021/22 by Gender

Student Characteristic	Year	Value	Total Awards	Third Class	Lower Second Class	Upper Second Class	First Class	Good Degrees
Gender	2017/18	Total	557	1.8%	20.6%	52.2%	25.3%	77.6%
		Female	293	0.7%	17.4%	52.9%	29.0%	81.9%
		Male	264	3.0%	24.2%	51.5%	21.2%	72.7%
	2018/19	Total	576	2.6%	23.3%	47.0%	27.1%	74.1%
		Female	293	1.0%	21.2%	48.8%	29.0%	77.8%
		Male	283	4.2%	25.4%	45.2%	25.1%	70.3%
	2019/20	Total	596	1.8%	17.1%	49.3%	31.7%	81.0%
		Female	299	2.3%	12.0%	49.8%	35.8%	85.6%
		Male	297	1.3%	22.2%	48.8%	27.6%	76.4%
	2020/21	Total	612	2.5%	17.6%	46.7%	33.2%	79.9%
		Female	313	1.9%	12.8%	46.0%	39.3%	85.3%
		Male	299	3.0%	22.7%	47.5%	26.8%	74.2%
	2021/22	Total	561	4.46%	19.07%	43.49%	32.98%	76.5%
		Female	281	3.91%	16.73%	42.35%	37.01%	79.4%
		Male	280	5.00%	21.43%	44.64%	28.93%	73.6%

Chart 4: Degree classification profiles for Level 6 degree programmes at Plymouth Marjon University between 2017/18 and 2021/22 by Gender

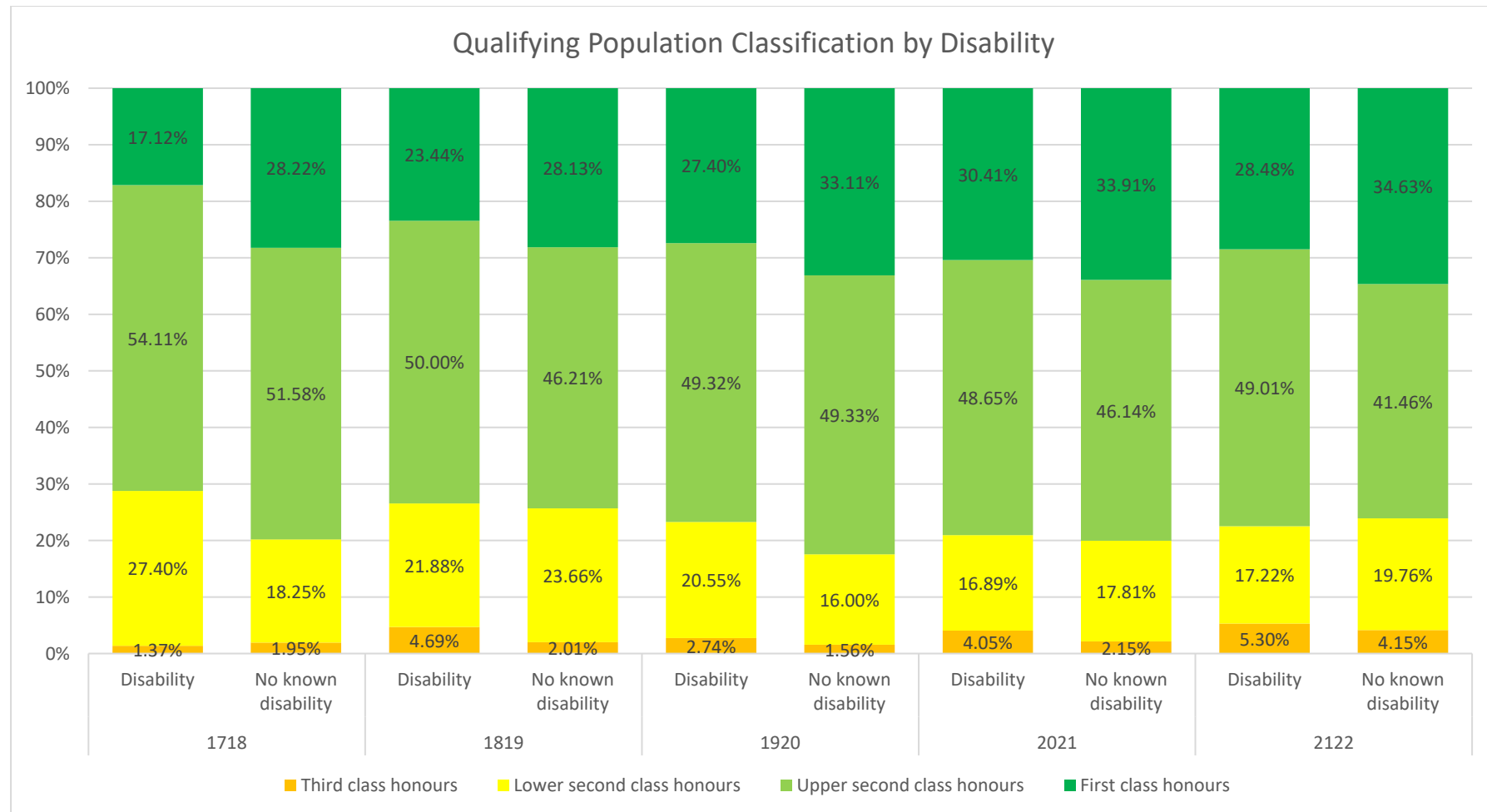


Student Characteristics: Disability

Table 4: Degree classification profiles for Level 6 degree programmes at Plymouth Marjon University between 2017/18 and 2021/22 by Disability

Student Characteristic	Year	Value	Total Awards	Third Class	Lower Second Class	Upper Second Class	First Class	Good Degrees
Disability	2017/18	Total	557	1.8%	20.6%	52.2%	25.3%	77.6%
		Disability	146	1.4%	27.4%	54.1%	17.1%	71.2%
		No known disability	411	1.9%	18.2%	51.6%	28.2%	79.8%
	2018/19	Total	576	2.6%	23.3%	47.0%	27.1%	74.1%
		Disability	128	4.7%	21.9%	50.0%	23.4%	73.4%
		No known disability	448	2.0%	23.7%	46.2%	28.1%	74.3%
	2019/20	Total	596	1.8%	17.1%	49.3%	31.7%	81.0%
		Disability	146	2.7%	20.5%	49.3%	27.4%	76.7%
		No known disability	450	1.6%	16.0%	49.3%	33.1%	82.4%
	2019/20	Total	614	4.1%	16.9%	48.6%	30.4%	79.1%
		Disability	148	2.1%	17.8%	46.1%	33.9%	80.0%
		No known disability	466	4.1%	16.9%	48.6%	30.4%	79.1%
	2020/21	Total	561	4.5%	19.1%	43.5%	33.0%	76.5%
		Disability	151	5.30%	17.22%	49.01%	28.48%	77.5%
		No known disability	410	4.15%	19.76%	41.46%	34.63%	76.1%

Chart 5: Degree classification profiles for Level 6 degree programmes at Plymouth Marjon University between 2017/18 and 2021/22 by Disability



Student Characteristic: Ethnicity

Table 5: Degree classification profiles for Level 6 degree programmes at Plymouth Marjon University between 2017/18 and 2021/22 by Ethnicity

Student Characteristic	Year	Value	Total Awards	Third Class	Lower Second Class	Upper Second Class	First Class	Good Degrees
Ethnicity	2017/18	Total	557	1.8%	20.6%	52.2%	25.3%	77.6%
		Other ethnic group	25	4.0%	28.0%	60.0%	8.0%	68.0%
		White	532	1.7%	20.3%	51.9%	26.1%	78.0%
	2018/19	Total	576	2.6%	23.3%	47.0%	27.1%	74.1%
		Other ethnic group	63	7.9%	39.7%	42.9%	9.5%	52.4%
		White	513	1.9%	21.2%	47.6%	29.2%	76.8%
	2019/20	Total	596	1.8%	17.1%	49.3%	31.7%	81.0%
		Other ethnic group	47	6.4%	23.4%	38.3%	31.9%	70.2%
		White	549	1.5%	16.6%	50.3%	31.7%	82.0%
	2020/21	Total	614	2.6%	17.6%	46.7%	33.1%	79.8%
		Other ethnic group	47	2.1%	19.1%	44.7%	34.0%	78.7%
		White	567	2.6%	17.5%	46.9%	33.0%	79.9%
	2021/22	Total	561	4.5%	19.1%	43.5%	33.0%	76.5%
		Other ethnic group	47	6.4%	27.7%	40.4%	25.5%	66.0%
		White	514	4.3%	18.3%	43.8%	33.7%	77.4%

Chart 6: Degree classification profiles for Level 6 degree programmes at Plymouth Marjon University between 2017/18 and 2021/22 by Ethnicity

