

Degree Outcomes Statement

UCEM 2020

1. Institutional degree classification profile

University College of Estate Management (UCEM) is the leading provider of supported online education solely for the built environment, with 100 years' experience of providing learning opportunities of the highest quality. UCEM is focused on providing industry-accredited qualifications through supported online education, accessible from anywhere in the world. The majority of UCEM students study part-time whilst in employment and have the flexibility to speed up or slow down their studies to support them in balancing this alongside their work and personal commitments. UCEM was granted taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) with effect from 1 January 2013, delivering its own validated programmes from autumn 2013. Prior to this, UCEM's BSc programmes were validated by the University of Reading (UoR).

Table 1: UCEM student attainment rates 2015/16 to 2018/19¹

Year of award	Number of awards (rounded to the nearest 10)	Upper second class honours	First class honours	Good Honours
2018/19	170	44%	17%	61%
2017/18	150	42%	12%	54%
2016/17	100	48%	13%	61%
2015/16	100	47%	10%	57%

An analysis of the data by student characteristic reveals the following:

- a slight upward shift in UCEM's classification profile, which can be attributed to the enhancements introduced when validating its own programmes following the TDAP approval – the attainment rate amongst students on UCEM's validated BSc programmes has been consistently higher than amongst students on a UCEM-delivered UoR validated BSc programme;
- all students entering UCEM's BSc programmes, regardless of their highest qualification on entry, have an opportunity of achieving a good honours degree², evidencing that UCEM's entry requirements are appropriate;
- the attainment rate amongst young students³ (70%) is higher than amongst mature students (57%); however, the proportion of mature students achieving a good honours degree has increased;

¹This data is derived from an analysis of UCEM's Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student Alternative record (SAR), which commenced in the 2015/16 academic year, and consists only of its students studying on first degree programmes in the UK. The SAR is collected for all students registered at the reporting provider and studying within the UK; students studying wholly outside of the UK for the duration of their programme are excluded. The records consisted of students studying on the UoR and UCEM validated programmes, with students on the latter increasing from 0% in 2015/16 to 85.5% in 2018/19. Due to the small population sizes the approach to rounding and suppression used by the Office for Students in its Access and Participation Data Dashboard has been adopted here.

² Good honours is the total of upper second class and first class honours.

³ Consistent with HESA grouping 'young' here includes all students aged under 21 on entry whilst 'mature' is any student that is aged 21 or over.

Degree Outcomes Statement

Continuation page

- consistent with trends seen in the wider higher education sector, the attainment rate amongst White students (61%) is higher than amongst Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students (30%). It should be noted that the number of BAME students in the data analysed is very low but UCEM continues to look for ways to support this group; and
- the attainment rate amongst students from Index of Multiple Deprivation⁴ (IMD) quintiles 1-2 (66%) is higher than amongst students from IMD quintiles 3-5 (56%).

2. Assessment and marking practices

When UCEM validated programmes were introduced, the assessment approach was amended, with the number of module assessments reduced from three to two and some exams removed where coursework submission could better assess learning outcomes and promote vocational learning.

UCEM ensures that assessment meets sector standards by:

- Using contextualised grading descriptors, informed by The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) 2014);
- setting assessments informed by QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and the requirements of UCEM's accrediting Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs);
- ensuring that all assessment is moderated in line with UCEM policy which accords with QAA recommended best practice;
- ensuring that marking criteria have been fairly, accurately and consistently applied during first marking, with moderation including statistical analysis of individual markers against the marking team;
- ensuring that there is appropriate consideration of student mitigating circumstances and that there is a clear procedure for consideration of student appeals; and
- ensuring that assessment is scrutinised by External Examiners at module level.

UCEM appoints External Examiners with reference to the criteria laid down in the [UCEM Code of Practice](#), to ensure they are suitably qualified and have relevant subject experience. UCEM's External examiners consistently agree that the marking and classification criteria are set at the appropriate level, that marking / grading criteria are properly and consistently applied, and that marking and grading is fair and reliable.

3. Academic governance

UCEM governance structures provide assurance that the value of qualifications is protected over time and that marking practices are adhered to. Board of Examiners reporting into Academic Board manage the scrutiny of results, utilising External Examiner critical review. Academic Board is the guardian of the academic quality and standards of UCEM's awards and, through its subcommittees, oversees the programme review and approval processes and the wider review of [academic regulations](#), policies and procedures. Academic Board reports to the [Board of Trustees](#)⁵, which receives reports on the maintenance of academic quality and standards including data on student achievement.

UCEM has made use of external assistance in assuring the degree outcomes statement: through the external representatives on the deliberative committees at which the statement has been reviewed and through the specific review by an External Examiner.

⁴ The English IMD measures relative deprivation for small areas (Lower Super Output Areas, LSOAs) in England, and ranks LSOAs in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived area). Further information about the English IMD is available on the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government website. Available at www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019 and www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015

⁵ UCEM's non-executive governing body

4. Classification algorithms

UCEM has a single algorithm to ensure fairness, consistency and transparency. UCEM awards are classified based solely on level 6 modules, supported by zones of consideration on borderline classifications where the candidate can demonstrate dominant quality at the higher classification. UCEM undertook a review of whether to introduce split level algorithms which included algorithm modelling but on reflection made the decision to continue with its current approach for the following reasons:

- a significant proportion of students join UCEM with advanced standing at both level 4 and level 5;
- the current approach assesses exit velocity; and
- UCEM wants to continue to offer flexible study options.

UCEM has recently standardised its approach to classification rounding moving from a 0.3 zone of consideration for automatic uplift to 0.5 to bring it into line with module rounding and help with clarity and transparency for stakeholders. This has been considered as part of the algorithm modelling and determined that it will have minimal impact on overall classifications.

UCEM currently allows for three attempts at each module, with no allowance for in-year resits. This policy will change in autumn 2020 with the introduction of resubmissions in order to support timely student progression.

The classification boundaries, rounding and number of module attempts are made clear to students within the [regulations](#).

5. Teaching practices and learning resources

Over the last four years UCEM has made a number of significant enhancements to its teaching practices and learning resources. When UCEM introduced its own validated programmes it was moving away from the 'traditional' distance learning approach used for its UoR validated programmes to a supported online approach. This redesign:

- provided a structured student-centred online learning environment with content developed in bite size sections and using a range of online resources;
- involved the academic team working in collaboration with learning designers and editors to ensure that learning materials are logically structured, accessible and effectively support students; and
- strengthened module monitoring and evaluation, through analysis of performance against agreed module Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and weekly feedback from students reviewed by the Module Leader.

More recent enhancements include:

- an enhanced assessment verification process introduced in 2017-18 to provide more student direction with assessment tasks, making assessments more accessible. Alongside this was the introduction of new marking feedback template to ensure consistent quality feedback is provided to students with clear signposting for future improvement; and
- a change to the tutoring model in 2018-19 allowing students access to wider tutor expertise and the addition of the new role of academic support tutor.

UCEM continues to capture and respond to student feedback via in-delivery weekly feedback and module evaluation surveys, to continually enhance its modules and programmes. UCEM has recently enhanced its approach to student engagement through engaging student representatives in reviewing new module resources.

6. Identifying good practice and actions

Areas of good practice identified include:

- QAA Reviewers and re-validation panels have commended the collaborative approach to developing and reviewing learning resources involving academics, instructional designers and the editorial team;
- re-validation panels also commended the delivery approaches informed by pedagogic research and the analysis of learner and tutor analytics;
- External Examiners have commended UCEM's culture of continued enhancement via their formal reports, with those reflecting at the end of their tenure have commented upon UCEM's improvements in process, quality and standards, as well as on positive changes to the student experience and enhancements to the quality of marking and feedback; and
- External Examiners have also commended the practical content, work-based application and the industry relevance of UCEM's programmes.

Future actions to improve student outcomes include:

- Ongoing monitoring of degree classification data trends and an annual review of this Statement. This is particularly important as although UCEM reviewed four-years worth of degree classification data, there was a change in awarding body and programmes being delivered which impacted on UCEM's profile;
- Continued focus upon supporting widening participation, with particular emphasis on BAME students; and
- exploring the possibility of extending the review to include UCEM's internationally based student body, who, as identified earlier, are currently excluded because this Statement draws on data from the HESA Student Alternative record which reports only on students studying in the UK.

7. Risks and challenges

The nature of UCEM's student cohort, in particular the fact that a significant proportion of students are studying part-time alongside full-time employment, means that UCEM needs to continue to allow flexibility in terms of pace of study in order to effectively support these students. This however poses challenges when trying to ensure that students complete their programmes in a timely manner and reach their potential to achieve good degree classifications.

As is evidenced by the analysis of classification data referred to in section one, a further challenge for UCEM is to ensure that all groups of students are supported to achieve good degree classifications.

UCEM will continue to use its governance system to keep these identified areas of risks / challenge under review and to take action as appropriate.