

Degree Outcomes Statement

UCEM 2022

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 over 100 years' experience of providing learning opportunities of the highest quality.¹ UCEM provides industry-accredited qualifications through supported online education, accessible from anywhere in the world. The majority of students study part-time whilst in employment and are supported to balance their study alongside work and personal commitments. UCEM has been delivering validated programmes under Taught Degree Awarding Powers since autumn 2013. Prior to this, UCEM's BSc programmes were validated by the University of Reading (UoR).

Table 1: UCEM student attainment rates 2016/17 to 2020/21²

| Year | Number of awards (rounded to the nearest 10) | Upper second class honours | First class honours | Good Honours |
|---------|--|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| 2020/21 | 480 | 52% | 25% | 77% |
| 2019/20 | 180 | 48% | 23% | 71% |
| 2018/19 | 170 | 44% | 17% | 61% |
| 2017/18 | 150 | 42% | 12% | 54% |
| 2016/17 | 100 | 48% | 13% | 61% |

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

- An upward shift in UCEM's classification profile, which can be attributed to (1) the enhancements introduced when validating its own programmes following the TDAP approval (see section 5 below) and (2) more latterly the increasing proportion of students studying as part of an apprenticeship (42% of the awards made in 2020/21 compared with 15% in 2019/20) with the attainment rate amongst this group being higher (84.7% awarded in 2020/21 achieving a Good Honours).
- All students entering UCEM's BSc programmes, regardless of their highest qualification on entry, have an opportunity of achieving a good honours degree³, evidencing that UCEM's entry requirements are appropriate.
- The attainment rate in 2020/21 amongst young students⁴ (83%) is higher than amongst mature students (73%); however, this gap has reduced since 2019-20 with the proportion of mature students achieving a good honours degree increasing.

¹This built environment focus means that UCEM has a very narrow subject offer. Accordingly, analysis by subject is not presented.

²This data is derived from an analysis of UCEM's Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student Alternative record (SAR). All of UCEM's programmes are delivered online, which means our international students study outside of the UK and are therefore excluded from our SAR (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). Due to some 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.

³ Good honours is the total of upper second class and first class honours.

⁴ 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.

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- The attainment rate in 2020/21 amongst White students (78%) is higher than amongst Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students (61%). The number of BAME students in the data analysed is very low but UCEM continues to look for ways to support this group.
- In 2020/21, a small gap in attainment rates was recorded between students from Index of Multiple Deprivation⁵ (IMD) quintiles 1-2 (75%) and students from IMD quintiles 4-5 (79%).

2. Assessment and marking practices

UCEM's assessment strategy is based on coursework submissions that 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 assessments are scrutinised at authoring stage by External Examiners (EE);
- ensuring that appropriate assessment direction and support is provided, particularly in respect of what a threshold, good and excellent assessment should look like;
- ensuring that marking criteria have been fairly, accurately and consistently applied during first marking;
- ensuring all assessments are moderated (including statistical analysis of markers against the marking team, and EE review) in line with a QAA best practice informed UCEM policy.
- Module Leaders reports provide detailed analysis across the modules that feeds into level review and programme review.

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. The Board of Examiners, reporting into the 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](#)⁶, 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 validity of 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. 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, in 2019/20 academic year, of

⁵ 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

⁶ UCEM's non-executive governing body

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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.

In February 2021 UCEM undertook a further review of its practice against UK Standing Committee on Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) 'Principles of Effective Degree Algorithm Design' and is committed to undertake a review of degree algorithms on a 5-yearly cycle. Following a rounding review in 2019/20, UCEM strengthened its approach to module rounding at the start of the 2020/21 academic year to move away from automatically raising marks that fall on a significant 9 to using a zone of borderline consideration where Module Leaders will review assessments to determine whether the student has met the module learning outcomes. However, in line with the UKSCQA guidance is committed to undertake a further review of rounding practices for introduction in the 2023/24 academic year.

Moreover, prior to the autumn 2020 semester UCEM allowed students three attempts at each module. This was changed from the autumn 2020 semester when UCEM introduced in-year resubmissions to support timely progression. From the autumn 2020 semester students are allowed a first sit, a resubmission, a retake and a resubmission of the retake.

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

During Covid-19 UCEM did not introduce a no detriment policy but instead focused on supporting students impacted via the mitigating circumstances procedure and also by requiring Module Leaders to comment on any impacts on the delivery of their modules due to Covid-19 in the Module Leader Reports considered at the Board of Examiners.

5. Teaching practices and learning resources

Over the last five years, under the UCEM validated programmes, UCEM has made a number of significant enhancements to its teaching practices and learning resources. These enhancements:

- involved the academic team working in collaboration with learning designers and editors to ensure that learning materials are logically structured in bite size sections, use a range of accessible online resources, and effectively support students within a structured student-centred online learning environment;
- evidence a shift in focus from resources to activities, to deepen students' engagement and maintain their study focus, as part of developing high-level learning relevant to students' workplaces;
- 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. This allowed for swift intervention when needed, an example of which is the introduction of an action plan targeted at level 4 modules aimed, in part, at supporting student academic skills to promote success at subsequent levels;
- introduced the role of Academic Support Tutors allowing UCEM to take a rigorous approach to monitoring engagement and providing targeted additional study skills support where needed.

More recent enhancements impacting on 2020/21 outcomes include:

- cohort analysis of assessment engagement and performance supported assessment design to ensure tasks set were inclusive to all disciplines;
- introducing drop-in sessions to support students with their assessments and other module related queries;
- restructuring of the 40-credit undergraduate project module to ensure that the module was structured around research activities. Students also receive enhanced support both via group tutorials and one to one support.

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.

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Another reason for UCEM's uplift in good degree classification is due to the increasing numbers of students studying their award as part of an apprenticeship programme. As outlined in Section 1 UCEM students studying as part of an apprenticeship are more likely to achieve good honours. UCEM has a well-established delivery model to support its apprentices to successful completion of their degree and then to completion of their end-point assessment. Apprentices and non-apprentices study the same undergraduate awards but as part of the apprenticeship delivery model apprentices are allocated an Apprenticeship Outcomes Officer to support and monitor their progress and development, both in relation to their academic programme and work-based learning. Apprentices are expected to attend professional practice workshops and are also required to spend 20% of their working hours in "off-the-job" activities focussed on their apprenticeship standard. Additional support from their employer in the workplace is part of the apprenticeship model. UCEM is anticipating a further increase in good degree classifications linked to the numbers of apprentices on programme and their access to greater support and time to study.

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 continue to commend the practical content, work-based application and the industry relevance of UCEM's programmes and acknowledge UCEM's culture of enhancement via their formal reports. They 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. External Examiners have also commended the continual enhancement in the provision of student support for the 40 credit Project module, resulting in improved academic performance.
- Re-validation panels have also commended the introduction of structured feedback templates that facilitate consistent and personalised feedback and the focus in supporting students to reflect on their feedback.
- As part of the successful (re)accreditation events professional bodies made commendations, including:
 - Chartered Association of Building Engineers (CABE), May-June 2020: impressive apprenticeship process, delivery, learner and employer support mechanisms; making a career in the built environment accessible to a broad range of students; innovative, engaging, challenging, rigorous assessment aligned to the work environment; support for the assessment strategy.
 - Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), December 2020: highly responsive to the student voice; detailed and good quality feedback to students; high-quality learning and student experience; quality internal review mechanism; dedicated staff across all the institution.
- [Ofsted's full inspection report](#) of UCEM in November 2021 provided further validation of the quality of the provision for apprentices. Specific reference was made during inspection to the quality of the learning and both employer and apprentice surveys carried out during the inspection showed very high approval scores from those key stakeholders.

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 all groups of students complete their programmes in a timely manner and reach their potential 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.

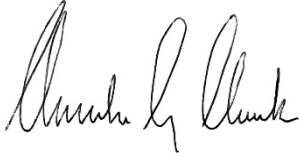
As an online institution, UCEM was well positioned to continue delivery without making significant amendments to its teaching and learning approach during the Covid-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, additional challenges were faced by UCEM students, including the impact of furlough (especially on apprentices). A series of measures were introduced to support students, including ongoing support from support tutors and the Outcomes Team; additional extensions

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to assessment deadlines; and communications of where students could seek help and support including a focus on mental health and wellbeing. Feedback from students and External Examiners continues to be positive on the mitigations UCEM has put in place during the pandemic, but it is important to note that the impact of Covid-19 will continue to be apparent in the timeliness of overall achievement of students for some time.

Signed:



Name:

Amanda Clack

Position:

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Date:

7th July 2022