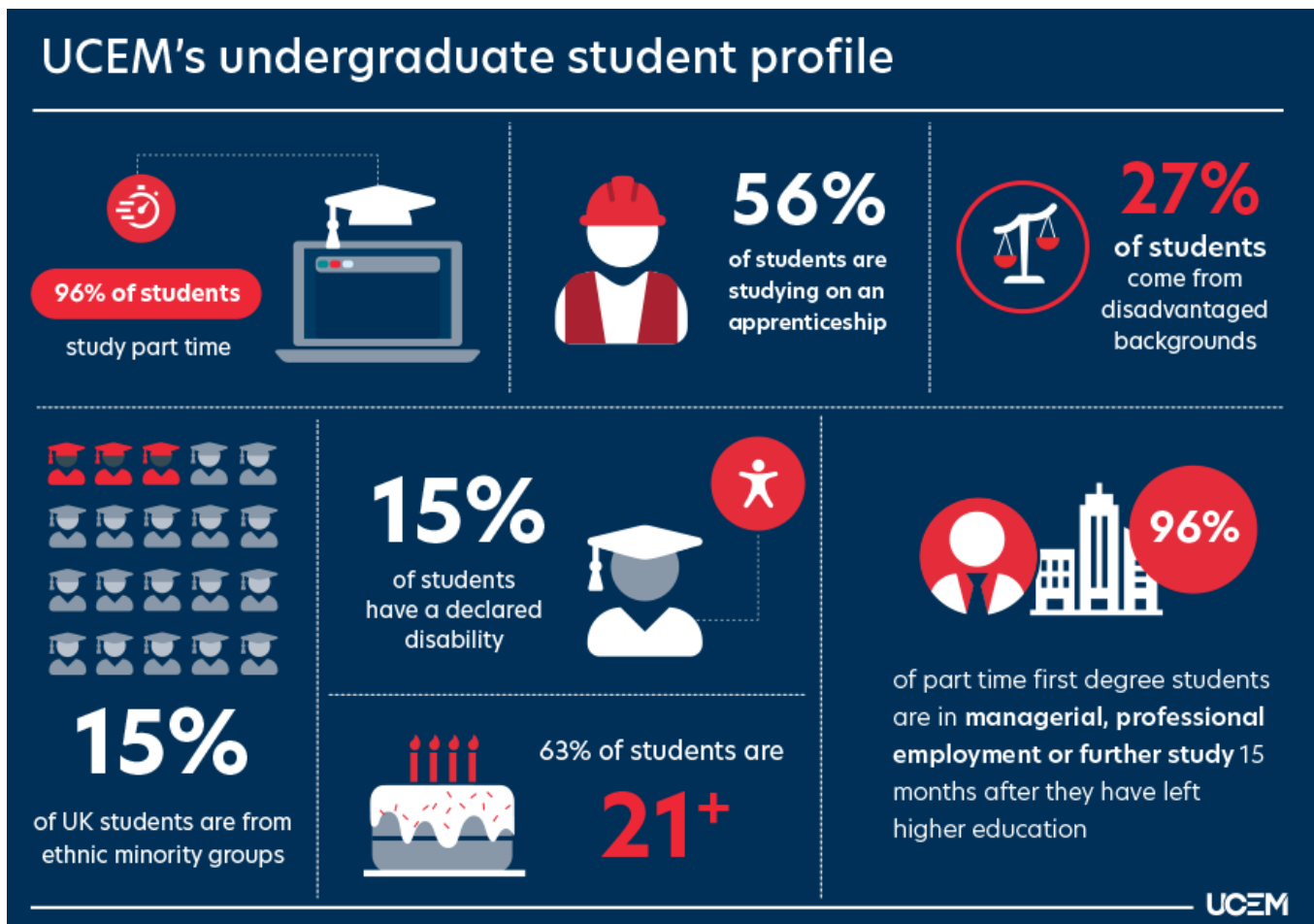


# Degree Outcomes Statement

## UCEM 2023

### 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.<sup>1</sup> 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. More than half of UCEM students are apprentices.



UCEM has been delivering validated programmes under Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) since Autumn 2013. Prior to this, UCEM's BSc programmes were validated by the University of Reading (UoR).

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

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Table 1: UCEM student attainment rates 2017/18 to 2021/22<sup>2</sup>

Year	Number of awards (rounded to the nearest 10)	Upper second class honours	First class honours	Good Honours
2021/22	340	54%	21%	75%
2020/21	480	52%	25%	77%
2019/20	180	48%	23%	71%
2018/19	170	44%	17%	61%
2017/18	150	42%	12%	54%

An analysis of the data reveals the following:

- a slight downward shift in UCEM's good honours<sup>3</sup> classification profile since 2020/21. The attainment rate in both 2021/22 and 2020/21 are higher than in previous years and this is attributed to:
  - 1) the enhancements introduced when validating UCEM's own programmes following the TDAP approval (see section 5 below) and
  - 2) Changes to the characteristics of UCEM's graduating cohort with the increase of students studying as part of an apprenticeship (42% and 62% of the awards made in 2020/21 and 2021/22 respectively compared with 15% in 2019/20) with the attainment rate amongst this group being higher.

Whilst UCEM has seen an upward shift in the number of first class honours and good honours awarded since 2017/18 it is still significantly below the sector average of 37.9% of students attaining a first class degree and 84.4% attaining a good honours in 2020-21.

- all students entering UCEM's BSc programmes, regardless of their highest qualification on entry, have an opportunity of achieving a good honours degree, evidencing that UCEM's entry requirements are appropriate;
- the attainment rate in 2021/22 amongst young students<sup>4</sup> (77.3%) is higher than amongst mature students (72.6%); however, the gap is very small (77.7% versus 76.6%) amongst students studying as part of an apprenticeship, meaning the overall gap is likely to be explained by the high proportion of young students studying in this way;
- the attainment rate in 2021/22 amongst white students (77.6%) is higher than amongst ethnic minority students (54.3%). The number of ethnic minority students in the data analysed is very low but UCEM continues to look for ways to support this group;
- in 2021/22, a gap in attainment rates was recorded between students from Index of Multiple Deprivation<sup>5</sup> (IMD) quintiles 1-2 (67.6%) and students from IMD quintiles 4-5 (79.7%);

## 2. Assessment and marking practices

UCEM's assessment strategy is based on coursework submissions that assess learning outcomes and promote the incorporation of experiential learning. UCEM ensures that assessment meets sector standards by:

<sup>2</sup>This 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.

<sup>3</sup> Good honours is the total of upper second class and first class honours.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019) and [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015)

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- 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;
- 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 there is appropriate consideration of student mitigating circumstances, support for students with disabilities through additional support plans and there is a clear procedure for consideration of student appeals;
- 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;
- using Module Leaders reports to 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. For each programme UCEM appoints both an academic and industry practitioner External Examiner which has the advantage of encouraging the symbiosis of theory and practice knowledge. 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. UCEM has reviewed its external examining practices to ensure that they align with the UK Standing Committee for Quality (UKSCQA) External Examiners Principles.

To further strengthen assessment arrangements UCEM plans to introduce programme competency standards within the 2023/24 academic year.

### 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 receives annual reports summarising the feedback received from UCEM External Examiners. 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](#)<sup>6</sup>, which receives reports on the maintenance of academic quality and standards including data on student achievement. There are student members on UCEM's main deliberative committees including Academic Board and on UCEM's Board of Trustees.

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's rationale for this approach is driven by:

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<sup>6</sup> UCEM's non-executive governing body  
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- a significant proportion of students joining UCEM with advanced standing at both Level 4 and Level 5;
- the current approach assessing exit velocity; and
- UCEM intending to continue to offer flexible study options.

In February 2021 UCEM undertook a further review of its practice against UKSCQA 'Principles of Effective Degree Algorithm Design' and is committed to undertake a review of degree algorithms on a 5-yearly cycle.

UCEM offers students four attempts at a module (a first sit, a resubmission, a retake, and a resubmission of the retake) except where required otherwise by apprenticeship standards assessment plans. Overall module marks achieved at resubmission or retake are capped at the module pass mark unless there are valid mitigating circumstances, and the student has been given an attempt disregarded and the submission is treated as a first submission.

In 2020/21 academic year UCEM moved 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 learning outcomes.

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

## 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 learner friendly 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 2021/22 outcomes include:

- substantive enhancements made to UCEM modules via a detailed project known as HELP (Higher Engagement Lower Pressure) that increased the time students could spend on their assessments and focused their study time on core activities. Some aspects of HELP were introduced in Spring 2022, although most were designed to take effect from Autumn 2022;
- promoting academic integrity through the use of internal Communities of Practice and student-facing academic integrity week events. This work has seen a drop in referrals to Academic Misconduct Panel;
- extending drop-in session support to students, particularly with their assessments and other module related queries, following the successful pilot in 2020/21;
- the introduction of video-assessment to the 40-credit undergraduate project module enabling students to better articulate their research proposal.

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.

As outlined in Section 1 UCEM students studying as part of an apprenticeship are more likely to achieve good honours as apprentices consistently out-perform non-apprentice students at module level. UCEM has

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a well-established delivery model to support apprentices to successful degree completion and onto 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 academic and work-based progress and development. This is managed and co-ordinated with the apprentices' employers meaning the wrap-around support ensures off-the-job and on-the-job learning combine to allow apprentices to achieve their best possible outcomes.

Additionally, apprentices attend professional practice workshops and are required to spend 20% of their working hours in off-the-job activities focussed on the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours required by the apprenticeship standard. 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. UCEM is also considering any good practice that can be learnt from the success of its apprenticeship programmes that could support students that are studying with UCEM on a standard part time route.

## 6. Identifying good practice and actions

Areas of good practice identified include:

- All External Examiners in the reporting period confirming that UCEM programmes are aligned with the UK FHEQ and applicable subject benchmarks, with a few External Examiners commending UCEM that the level of student work is at least equal to or exceeds the standards expected.
- External Examiners continuing to commend the practical content, work-based application, and the industry relevance of UCEM's programmes and the real-world scenarios UCEM uses in assessment tasks. External Examiners commending UCEM's culture of enhancement, and the efforts to enhance student engagement and to support students during the pandemic period. 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.
- The use of CMAs (Computer Marked Assessment) as summative assessments in supporting student confidence early in their studies and allowing for breadth of knowledge, especially in foundation topics, to be demonstrated. When combined with written assessments that test depth of a specific area of knowledge, this assessment profile ensures that students have the range of knowledge needed for their professional roles and that they move on to higher levels of their programme with a secure grounding in the basic principles and theories they need.
- (Re)-validation panels commending the delivery approaches informed by pedagogic research and the analysis of learner and tutor analytics, the valuable connections with industry and employers, UCEM's work around Equality Diversity and Inclusion and the initiatives that are in place to widen participation, the interconnectedness of both the academic and apprenticeship support and the timeliness and tailored nature of these interventions, as well as the introduction of structured feedback templates that facilitate consistent and personalised feedback and the focus in supporting students to reflect on their feedback.
- UCEM's Higher Education Apprenticeship External Adviser reflecting at the end of his tenure in 2022 that UCEM has an excellent system and an excellent team overseeing apprenticeship provision and supporting successful outcomes in their degree studies.
- [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.
- Additional confirmation of UCEM's high quality provision are acceptance onto the ESFA's Register of End-Point Assessment Organisations and successful refresh of UCEM's registration on the Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA) Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers.

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UCEM has a culture of continuous improvement with all teams across the institution regularly reflecting on performance and listening to external stakeholder and student feedback. These actions are captured on the institutional and programme level Quality Enhancement Plans, through the institutional scorecard and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy Action Plan, all of which are reviewed regularly by deliberative committees or by the Senior Leadership Team.

## **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. A series of measures were introduced to support students, including ongoing support from support tutors and the Outcomes Team; additional extensions 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 was positive on the mitigations UCEM had 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.

The cost-of-living crisis is likely to have an impact on students, especially for those who are self-funding and UCEM expects an adverse impact on registrations and for students who do register there could be additional pressures brought about by the economic climate. Inevitably, a deeper economic crisis would also be likely to impact on employers' willingness or ability to invest in training and development potentially leading to reduced volumes of applicants. Whether or not this would further impact on the demand for built environment professionals remains to be seen.