



Plymouth College of Art

Degree Outcomes Statement

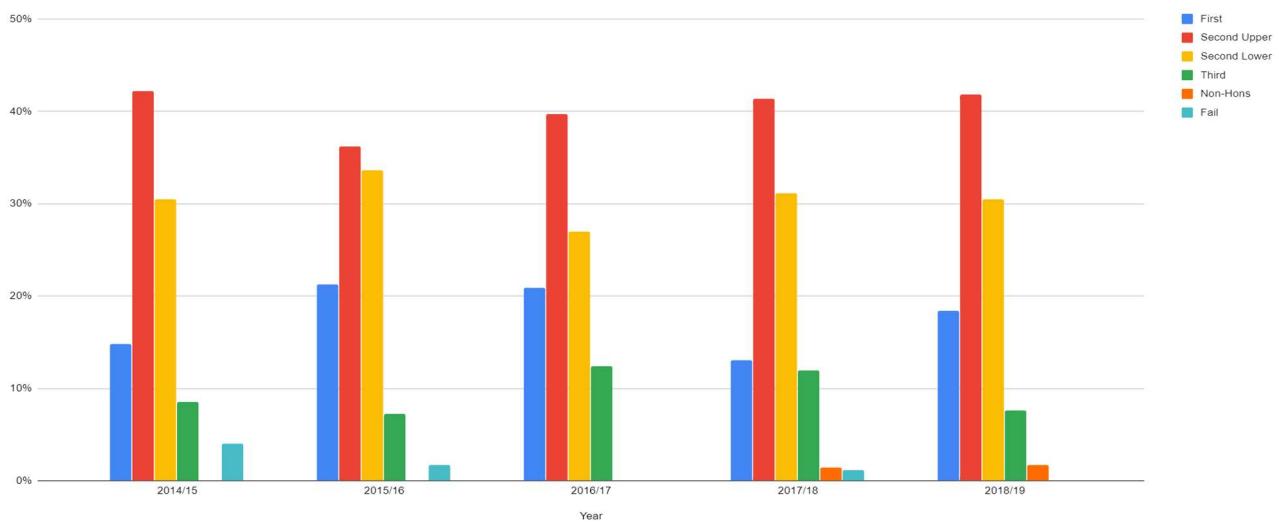
September 2020

1. Institutional Degree Classification Profile

Plymouth College of Art was granted Taught Degree Awarding Powers in March 2019. Previous to this, the College's degree programmes were validated and awarded by the Open University. The degree classification profile shown below covers Academic Years 2014/15 to 2018/19. This statement does not include the 2019/20 Academic Year, due to the impact of COVID19 and subsequent adjustments to award timescales.

All %						
Year	First	Second Upper	Second Lower	Third	Non-Hons	Fail
2014/15	15%	42%	30%	9%	0%	4%
2015/16	21%	36%	34%	7%	0%	2%
2016/17	21%	40%	27%	12%	0%	0%
2017/18	13%	41%	31%	12%	1%	1%
2018/19	18%	42%	31%	8%	2%	0%

Classification profile



1. This data is presented at Institutional Level, as it provides a clear overview of student performance over the last five years, and is not skewed by changes in the curriculum offer or small cohorts on some programmes.
2. The College monitors degree classifications by gender, age, ethnicity, entry profile, these data are available on request.

3. The College reports on the achievement of 'good' degrees, those achieving 1st or 2.1, for monitoring purposes and the trends over the last 5 years show a consistent performance, other than a dip in 2017/18 with 54% of students achieving at this level.

The College recognises that the level of awards made are lower than the national average with typically 60% of degree classifications awarded over the past 53 years being upper second or above, compared to the around 70% national average. There is no evidence to suggest this is not appropriate; on the contrary, input from External Examiners comprehensively endorses assessment decisions and the College is proud of how this reflects the rigour involved in its assessment procedures. However, the College also recognises this as an area for ongoing development and continues to explore ways in which to promote exemplars for high achievement and so assure absolute clarity of understanding for students in pursuit of 1st/2:1 awards.

2. Assessment and Marking Practices

The College has in place a set of procedures that govern the assessment and marking process, and these are promulgated to both staff and students for transparency. These procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure alignment with sector reference points, including those set by QAA and OfS, FHEQ, such as the FHEQ and subject benchmark statements. An annual programme of staff development is in place to ensure engagement with the procedures, including full induction for all new teaching staff.

Appropriateness of assessment related to programme and learning outcomes have been reviewed through validation and revalidation activity, and will be a key focus of periodic review activity as the College moves forwards with TDAP.

Students are provided with detailed programme documentation to refer to including the programme specification, module handbook, and detailed module guides which clarify the assessment tasks required and how these will be graded.

Many PCA staff are External Examiners at other HEIs around the UK and abroad, and staff have been supported to complete the Advance HE External Examiner professional development programme.

The College has a standard 'grading matrix' in place for all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes to ensure there is a consistent approach to marking across all disciplines.

3. Academic Governance

The College's Board of Governors are responsible for corporate governance which includes the leadership, direction and control of the College, with the aim of improving the efficiency and effectiveness within the organisation through the relationship with management and the

organisation stakeholders. This includes oversight of all academic delivery and related standards.

Academic Board is the College's senior academic committee, which manages its business through a series of sub-committees, with responsibility for academic regulations; assessment and moderation practice; curriculum development; academic standards; validation, revalidation and periodic review.

Strong communication between Academic Board and the Board of Governors is essential, and this is enhanced by the Principal, who chairs Academic Board and also sits on the Board of Governors.

The Board of Governors receives termly update in regard to quality monitoring and annual report on the outcome of quality monitoring and review activities, having been considered first by Academic Board. Annual report draws on a range of evidence, including report from award boards, external examiner reports, key academic performance indicators, individual programme and school annual monitoring reports, and programme validations/revalidations.

4. Classification algorithms

As stated previously, the College was awarded Taught Degree Awarding Powers in March 2019, and any awards made during the time period covered by this statement were validated by the Open University, and as such were subject to the academic regulations laid down by the OU. There is, and has always been, one algorithm in place for all undergraduate courses.

For the Academic Years 2018-19, 2017-18 the algorithm was as follows:

- An average of grades across all modules in Level 5 (120 credits) and Level 6 (120 credits) weighted 1/3 Level 5 and 2/3 Level 6.
(for students studying at Level 6 only, the final grade is based on Level 6 performance only)

For the Academic years 2016-17, 2015-16, 2014-15 the algorithm was as follows:

- An aggregate of grades across all modules in Level 5 (120 credits) and level 6 (120 credits) weighted 30% Level 5 and 70% Level 6.
(for students studying at Level 6 only, the final grade is based on Level 6 performance only)

It is also worth noting that the Academic Regulations also changed in consideration of borderline cases, where for the years 2014-15 to 2016-17 students within 3% of the higher classification banding were considered for an uplift, whereas from 2017-18 onwards this was reduced to 1%.

The College monitored closely if changes to these methodologies had a negative impact on any student achievement, and found the impact to be negligible.

5. Teaching practices and learning resources

The College is fully committed to the continuous improvement of quality provision and student achievement and can demonstrate this through a range of activities. A fundamental part of this activity is the Annual Monitoring process, supported by comprehensive performance data including attendance, retention, achievement and progression to professional employment and/or further study. Significant emphasis is placed on student feedback and input with part of this being the importance placed on Module Evaluation Reports (MERs) to encourage comprehensive use; MERs are clearly evidenced in Annual Monitoring. The College engages fully with and responds honestly and promptly to External Examiner Reports. Oversight of this activity and output by Academic Standards and Quality Committee has been improved, supporting greater oversight by Academic Board and consequent assurance on behalf of the Board of Governors regarding the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and of student outcomes.

Through workshops and other training events including those led by external facilitators held over the past 5 years and managed by the Academic and Learning and Teaching directorates, debate among staff regarding best and shared practice has increased significantly. Output has included improvement in the format of module briefs and a greater focus on compliance with regulations and transparency for assessment and guidelines for tutorials. Alongside this activity is an annual moderation event for Level 6 work across the curriculum to ensure parity of approach across all programmes.

6. Identifying good practice and actions

The College has identified a range of actions as part of its continual drive to improve the student experience and levels of attainment:

1. A full curriculum review and introduction of ‘common unit framework’ across all Undergraduate and Postgraduate provision -
2. A review of the approach to grading of student work, including a full review and revision of the current grading matrices.
3. A programme of staff development to ensure consistency of practice across all disciplines and levels of study; support for staff to undertake External Examiner training (Advance HE) and to take up External Examiner roles in other institutions.
4. Ongoing review of degree algorithms to ensure suitability as the curriculum offering develops.