



**Plymouth College of Art**

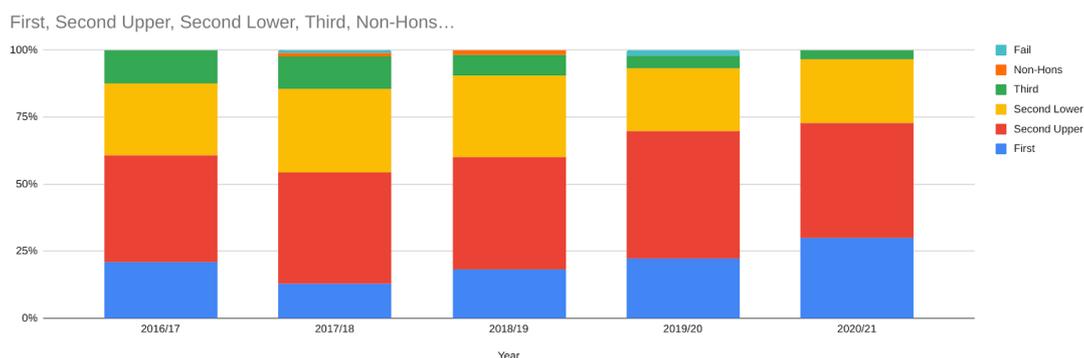
**Degree Outcomes Statement**

**October 2021**

## 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 2016/17 to 2020/21 .

All %						
Year	First	Second Upper	Second Lower	Third	Non-Hons	Fail
2016/17	21%	40%	27%	12%	0%	0%
2017/18	13%	41%	31%	12%	1%	1%
2018/19	18%	42%	31%	8%	2%	0%
2019/20	22%	47%	23%	5%	0%	2%
2020/21	30%	43%	24%	3%	0%	0%



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, noting an increase in good degrees in the last 2 academic years, with 74% of students achieving a 1st or 2.1 in the 2020/21 Academic Year.

The College recognises that the level of awards made continues to be lower than the national average with latest published data being 82%, but is delighted with the success of our students in difficult circumstances. The impact of adjustments made during the COVID19 pandemic, affecting both the 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years, has undoubtedly led to an increase in the level of awards made by the College. Students were given blanket extensions to deadlines, supported to make

extenuating circumstances claims, and given an increased level of support from staff, all of which have had a positive impact on final results. Input from External Examiners comprehensively endorses assessment decisions and the College is proud of how this reflects the rigour involved in its assessment procedures.

## **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.

During the COVID19 pandemic, the College introduced a range of 'no detriment' measures to support students in achieving their awards. There were extensions to coursework submission dates, enhanced extenuating circumstances processes, adjustments to submission requirements, and the introduction of an 'assessment intent' form to enable students to present work in progress for assessment with a narrative on what they had originally intended to produce during the period of lockdown, to be used as part of the marking process by academic staff.

## **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.

As required by OfS, an annual assurance report is considered by Academic Board and submitted to the Board of Governors for approval. This report seeks to provide assurances that indicate academic governance is operating effectively in Plymouth College of Art, and provides signposting to a range of evidence that is routinely reported to the Board of Governors to support this assurance.

#### **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 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%.

As part of the no detriment measures introduced by the College during the COVID19 Pandemic adjustments were made to the classification algorithm to support students

whose achievement may have been negatively affected by a prolonged period of lockdown events.

For the Academic Year 2019-20 there were 2 algorithms applied for each student, awarding the most favourable in every case:

Method 1: The normal College regulation - 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.

Method 2: An aggregate of grades across all modules in Level 5 (120 credits) and modules 301/304 in Level 6 (60 credits) weighted 30% Level 5 and 70% Level 6.

For the Academic Year 2020-21 there were 2 algorithms applied for each student, awarding the most favourable in every case:

Method 1: The normal College regulation - 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.

Method 2: An aggregate of grades across all modules in Level 6 only (120 credits)

The algorithm used in 2020-21 will remain in place for students due to graduate in 2021-22 to mitigate against the impact of the pandemic on their studies at Levels 4 and 5.

## **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.