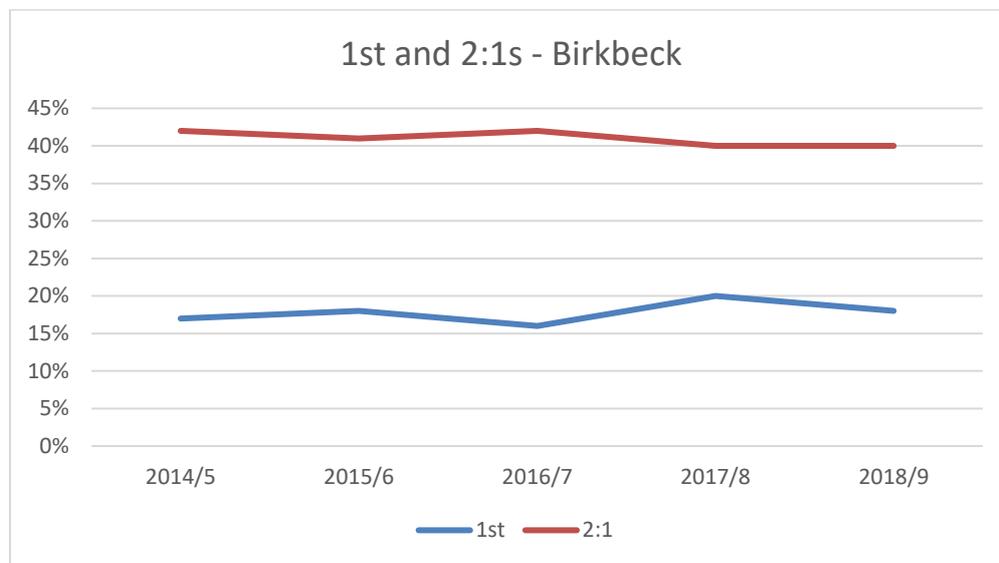


Degree Outcomes Statement for Birkbeck, University of London

The statement describes how Birkbeck meets the expectations of the Quality Code for Higher Education to protect the value of its qualifications over time.

1. Institutional Degree Classification Profile



Percentage	1st	2:1	2:2	3rd	Pass
2014/5	17%	42%	37%	4%	0%
2015/6	18%	41%	34%	5%	2%
2016/7	16%	42%	34%	8%	2%
2017/8	20%	40%	35%	3%	1%
2018/9	18%	40%	32%	6%	4%

The proportion of 1sts and 2:1s awarded by the College has remained broadly stable at Birkbeck over the last five years. The College analysed its attainment trends across different student characteristics as part of its approved [Access and Participation Plan 2020-21 to 2024-25](#) (APP). An APP implementation group has been established to oversee actions agreed as part of this plan and to monitor their success.

2. Assessment and Marking Practices

2.1 Birkbeck's [Common Awards Scheme](#) outlines the regulations relating to taught programmes of study. The CAS regulations are divided into four sections: Part 1 (General Regulations), Part 2 (Structure and Framework), Part 3 (Assessment) and Part 4 (Conferment of Awards). The College has a robust quality assurance structure that ensures that the assessment of programme and modules are designed, approved and reviewed in line with external expectations for academic

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standards and quality (FHEQ, QAA subject benchmarks, PSRB requirements, UK Quality Code for HE). Assessment methods and clear assessment criteria are used to test the achievement of learning outcomes at the appropriate level as defined in approved module and programme specifications.

- 2.2 External examiners are appointed in accordance with the [College's Policy on External Examining](#) to confirm that the academic standards set for the College's awards are appropriate and that the assessment processes are rigorous, ensure equity of treatment for students and have been fairly conducted within institutional regulations and guidance. External examiners report on the standards of student performance and their comparability with the standards and student achievements of those in other higher education institutions.
- 2.3 The College has a [Marking and Moderation Policy](#) that governs how marking must be conducted across the College. Assessment criteria must be clearly defined, approved and made available to students, marking should be anonymous (except where this is not practically possible) and all summative assessment must be second marked or moderated. The College also has a [Policy on Feedback on Assessment](#) to support the students' learning process.
- 2.4 The College has a [Mitigating Circumstances Policy](#) which enables the College to take into account circumstances that have prevented students from demonstrating their achievement in assessments and take action to mitigate the impact of this where appropriate.
- 2.5 The College has a clear [academic appeals policy](#) for its taught programmes which enables students to appeal on the following grounds: (i) undisclosed mitigating circumstances, (ii) administrative error or (iii) an assessment or assessment decision not having been conducted in accordance with the College's regulations and policies.
- 2.6 Birkbeck conducted a review of its assessment regulations and related policies in the 2018/19 academic year to identify areas that could be negatively impacting continuation, attainment and the overall student experience. An external consultant was appointed to provide advice during the review process. The review concluded that assessment processes were appropriate but there was scope to ensure a more consistent institutional approach to programme design and progression arrangements. The College approved a common structure for its undergraduate degree programmes of 120 credits at levels 4, 5 and 6. Some programmes had previously comprised more than 120 credits at level 6 which was outside normal sector practice. Clear and consistent progression rules for all undergraduate taught programmes of study were approved and these have been formally introduced at the beginning of the 2020/21 academic year. A limit has been introduced to the regulations on the number of credits that can be studied in any academic year that students are required to retake modules. All undergraduate students are now entitled to an automatic reassessment opportunity at 2nd attempt regardless of their performance on the 1st attempt and all undergraduate students will have the maximum number of attempts to pass a module increased from 3 to 4 which is in line with sector norms. A more appropriate distribution of modules at levels 4, 5 and 6 to support the learning process and our

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move to ensure that students have a more manageable workload when retaking modules aims to improve retention and lead to an increase in the number of students achieving better degree outcomes in the future.

3. Academic Governance

3.1 Modules and programmes are developed at department level with reference to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and QAA Subject Benchmarks. All proposals for new programmes and amendments to programmes are considered for approval by one of the five School Education Committees. New programmes of study and major amendments to programmes are further scrutinised by the institutional-level College Programmes Committee (which reports to the College's Education Committee) prior to their final approval. This approval process ensures that programme design (curriculum, learning outcomes, modules, credit volume/levels and assessment) is in line with national qualification descriptors as well as the College's own regulations. All programmes have programme directors who oversee the running of programmes to support the implementation of fair and appropriate assessment across programmes at department level. Expert guidance on programme and module approval is provided and supported by the Academic Standards and Quality Office.

3.2 The College's Academic Board governs the awarding of degrees at Birkbeck. Academic Board devolves authority to four [College Boards of Examiners](#) which cover all the subject areas for both undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes of study. The College Boards receive reports from Sub-boards of Examiners that operate within the College's academic departments. Sub-boards of examiners are appointed in accordance with [College Policy on Sub-Boards of Examiners](#). Sub-boards have responsibility for ensuring that marking and moderation is conducted appropriately in all subject areas at department level. Sub-boards of examiners approve marks for all elements for assessment and overall module marks. College Boards and Sub-Boards of Examiners ensure that the Policy on Marking and Moderation is applied consistently and that trends in results are analysed to ensure that standards remain comparable between programmes and cohorts. Each College board and sub-board includes an external examiner who provides independent, external input into the operation of the College's assessment processes. Briefings are provided to Chairs and Secretaries of College Boards and Sub-Boards by the Academic Standards and Quality Office annually.

3.3 [Quality monitoring at Birkbeck](#) is underpinned by the two key processes of Annual Monitoring and Internal Review (four yearly). Both processes are data informed and assist the college in reviewing its provision, to ensure that appropriate learning opportunities are available to students which enable the intended learning outcomes of programmes to be achieved. The processes evaluate student attainment of academic standards.

3.4 In terms of [collaborative provision at Birkbeck](#), the College's processes are aligned with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education and associated Advice and Guidance for Partnerships. These include: collaborative partner approval, completion of a risk assessment, and appropriate academic, financial and legal due diligence checks. All

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processes are overseen by the Collaborative Approval Panel. The approach to quality monitoring of collaborative provision is subsumed under the same processes as for on-campus provision.

3.5 The College remains confident that its governance structure is robust and ensures that the value of its qualifications awarded by the University of London over time is protected. All College regulations and policies are reviewed and subject to a review led by the Academic Standards and Quality Office to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and in line with sector expectations for quality and standards.

4. Classification algorithms

4.1 Algorithm

The [algorithms used by Birkbeck to determine award degree classifications](#) are outlined clearly for students and staff members. The algorithm is based on an average mark of all module marks and is a figure between 0-100. For undergraduate degrees (360 credits) the average is a weighted based on the levels of the modules awarded. Level 4 modules are weighted 0 and do not count to the final weighted average. Level 5 modules are weighted 1, and level 6 modules are weighted 2. The increase of weightings is regarded as a fair system for calculation as it means students' final classifications are not affected adversely by performance on modules taken at the beginning of the period of study (level 4) when they are making the adjustment to higher education, it reflects the progression of learning and it places greatest weight on level 6 modules, the level at which the final degree qualification is awarded. No changes have been made to the degree algorithm since the introduction of the [Common Awards Scheme](#) to Birkbeck in the 2008/9 academic year. There are currently no plans to make any changes to the algorithm.

4.2 Borderline

Students who achieve an overall weighted average mark that is within 2.00% under a borderline classification may be considered by sub-boards for discretionary uplifting to the higher degree classification. The College has clarified the application of discretion to ensure an institutionally consistent approach with fair and valid outcomes. Only students who demonstrate preponderance of achievement at the higher classification or are those who have an accepted case for mitigating circumstances can be awarded the higher classification.

5. Teaching Practices and Learning Resources

5.1 Over the five-year period, new permanent teaching staff members at Birkbeck have been registered on the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education delivered in the College. PhD students with teaching responsibilities have been provided with introductory sessions and fundamentals of teaching workshops as well as the opportunity to take a Graduate Certificate in Higher Education. Academic staff are provided with support in preparing applications for Advance HE fellowship. The College is reviewing its academic development support for new teaching staff in the 2020/21 academic year and has established a subcommittee for the professional development of educators (reporting to the Education Committee) to oversee this.

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5.2 A comprehensive review of the student experience was conducted by the College in 2017 with endorsement of a series of recommendations by Academic Board in 2018. This has led to:

- Significant investment in, and development, of the College's approach to digital education in order to provide more flexible delivery and an effective and comprehensive virtual learning environment alongside in-person teaching to support our students, many of whom are combining studies with work and family responsibilities. An extensive review of the College's use of technology enhanced learning was conducted in summer 2018. A Head of Digital Education was appointed in Summer 2019 along with a team of experienced e-learning technologists. The College approved a new baseline for the standard of its Moodle modules in summer 2020. The Birkbeck Baseline is founded on six core principles including consistency, clarity and transparency of key information, clear navigation, transparent assessment and feedback, effective communication opportunities, engaging activities and accessible to all students.
- The College embedding [Studiosity](#) to support students in preparing for assessment.
- Students with a declared disability or learning need are offered an opportunity to create a Study Support Plan underpinned by reasonable adjustments.
- The Personal Tutor Policy was revised to make roles and responsibilities clearer and an online student engagement tool has been piloted with work to develop this ongoing.
- Orientation and induction arrangements were streamlined for the 2019-20 academic year to ensure a more consistent college approach. This was built on in the 2020-21 academic year with the introduction of a comprehensive online orientation module which has improved the accessibility of key information at the start of the student journey.
- New IT systems are being developed to support education management to ensure that programme and module development, delivery, and evaluation are efficiently coordinated and compliant with QAA and CMA regulations.
- An extensive staff and student consultation on the Birkbeck teaching model conducted in autumn 2019. Academic Board agreed to implement a revised teaching model across all programmes by 2023. This will lead to greater consistency across the College, three term learning with assessment at the end of each term, attendance concentrated into as few evenings as possible with students supported by a comprehensive virtual learning environment.
- Improvements to the Birkbeck library were made in Summer 2019 to increase study and informal learning space. The College has made a considerable investment in e-textbooks and e-books to allow students to access their reading materials remotely during the pandemic. The library has increased its provision from 12,000 e-books to well over 180,000 additional volumes including many core texts.

The College is reviewing the implementation of the recommendations from the Student Experience Review which aim to increase student satisfaction levels, retention and attainment across the College in future years. The College has conducted further research into the BAME awarding gap which will be published in the 2020-21 year. Work being taken forward to address the awarding gap is a standing item on the agenda of the College's Education Committee. The College saw an increase in satisfaction levels across teaching, learning opportunities, quality of assessment and feedback and academic support in the 2020 National Student Survey. The

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College will be monitoring carefully how these enhancements influence the grade profile across different student characteristics at Birkbeck in future years.

6. Identifying Good Practice and Actions

The review of continuation and attainment data as part of the College's annual quality monitoring process overseen by the College's Education Committee at institutional level enables good practice to be identified and shared across the College. The College will be continuing to implement and review the recommendations from its Student Experience Review, the transition to a revised teaching model approved by the Academic Board in 2020 and commitments made in its approved [Access and Participation Plan 2020-21 to 2024-25](#). Degree outcomes data is reviewed by the College on an annual basis.

7. Approval of Degree Outcomes Statement

This statement has been considered by the College's Education Committee and Academic Board with final approval given by the Governing Body on the 24th March 2021.

Registry Services

April 2021