

## Degree Outcomes Statement 2022

The Degree Outcomes Statement presents and reflects upon Queen Mary University of London's classification profiles for undergraduate awards. The UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment ([UKSCQA](#)) asks providers to publish and act upon Degree Outcome Statements as part of the higher education sector's commitment to protecting the credibility and value of awards and classifications, both when granted and when compared to those conferred in past years. The 2022 statement includes additional consideration of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic upon outcomes and procedures linked to classification and award, in response to Universities UK's ([UUK's](#)) [commitments](#) on the long-term protection of the value of UK degrees.

The management of Queen Mary's Degree Outcome Statement is overseen by our Education Quality and Standards Board (EQSB), which includes representation from academic and professional services staff and our Students' Union. The Statement draws upon our examination boards, the reports of external examiners, statistical data, and strategic objectives and projects. The 2022 Statement has been scrutinised by the EQSB, Senate, and Council.

The UKSCQA document '[Degree Classification: Transparency, reliability and fairness – a statement of intent](#)' provides further information on Degree Outcomes Statements.

### Undergraduate degree classifications 2014-15 – 2021-22

The Degree Outcomes Statement normally covers five academic years. To respond to UUK's commitment to map a pathway to 2018-19 awarding levels the 2022 Statement includes consideration of the past eight years, including five pre-pandemic years. In accordance with UKSCQA guidance, the data under review comprises undergraduate honours awards at academic level six. It does not include postgraduate awards, level seven undergraduate masters awards, or unclassified undergraduate honours awards.

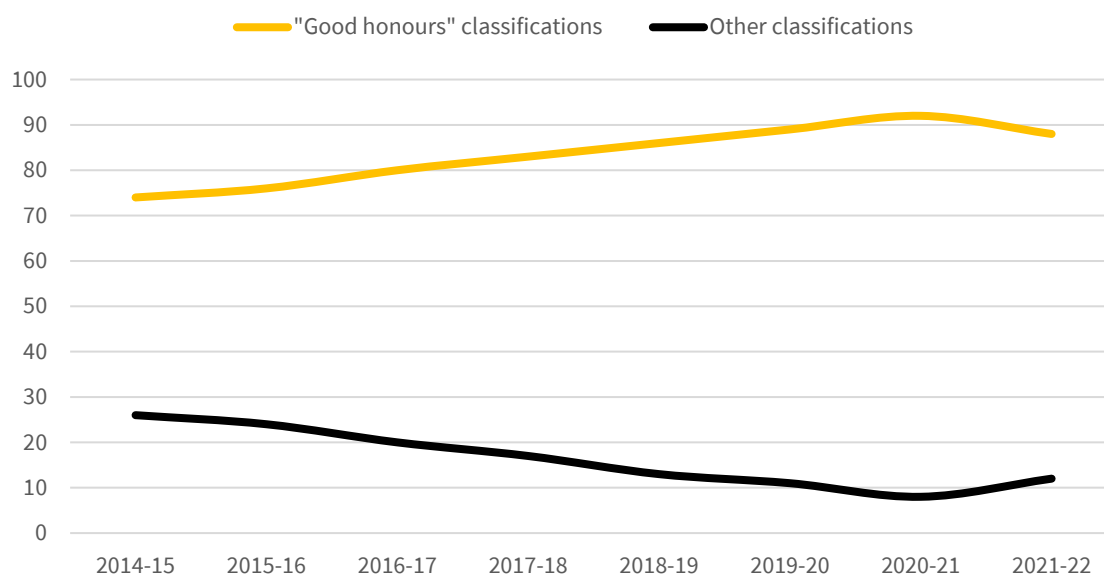
The figures below show trends in undergraduate classifications over the past eight years. This information is also presented in tabular form in [Appendix 1](#).

There has been an upward trend in so-called 'good honours' degrees (1st and 2:1 classifications) over the period of review (figure 1). During this period, the University made major steps to ensure that education and assessment at Queen Mary best meets the needs of our diverse student body. The University has set closing the value-added attainment gap between White and BAME students as an institutional key performance indicator. Progress made with closing the value-added attainment gap can be seen below:

Graduating cohort	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
<b>Value-added attainment gap between BAME and White students</b>	-0.07	-0.05	-0.06	-0.03	0.00

By considering the change in value-added score over time, the University can consider the extent to which our students are achieving outcomes which are comparable with similar students nationwide, based on their entry qualifications and their subject.

Figure 1: Good honours breakdown



Queen Mary put in place [mitigation measures](#) to protect the student experience and classification outcomes during the pandemic. These had an observable impact on outcomes in 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22, and we expect that to fall away in 2022-23. There was a slight acceleration in that upward trend in ‘good honours’ classifications during the pandemic, peaking in 2020-21 at 92%, but as of 2021-22 this has fallen back to 88%, close to the pre-pandemic 2018-19 figure of 86%.

A more significantly observable change has been in the distribution of classifications *within* the ‘good honours’ outcomes (figure 2). The pandemic years saw a discernible increase in the proportion of students achieving First Class outcomes, though principally from a commensurate reduction in students achieving 2:1 classifications rather than an across-the-board increase.

Figure 2 shows that this position is beginning to reverse as [coronavirus mitigations](#) have a reduced impact on algorithms that determine classification outcomes. In 2018-19 Queen Mary awarded First Class outcomes to 36% of students who achieved their intended awards. In 2021-22 that figure was 45% - a significant increase, but already markedly lower than 2020-21 (53%) and 2019-20 (49%). Again, this pattern can be attributed in large part to pandemic mitigation measures that are gradually falling away.

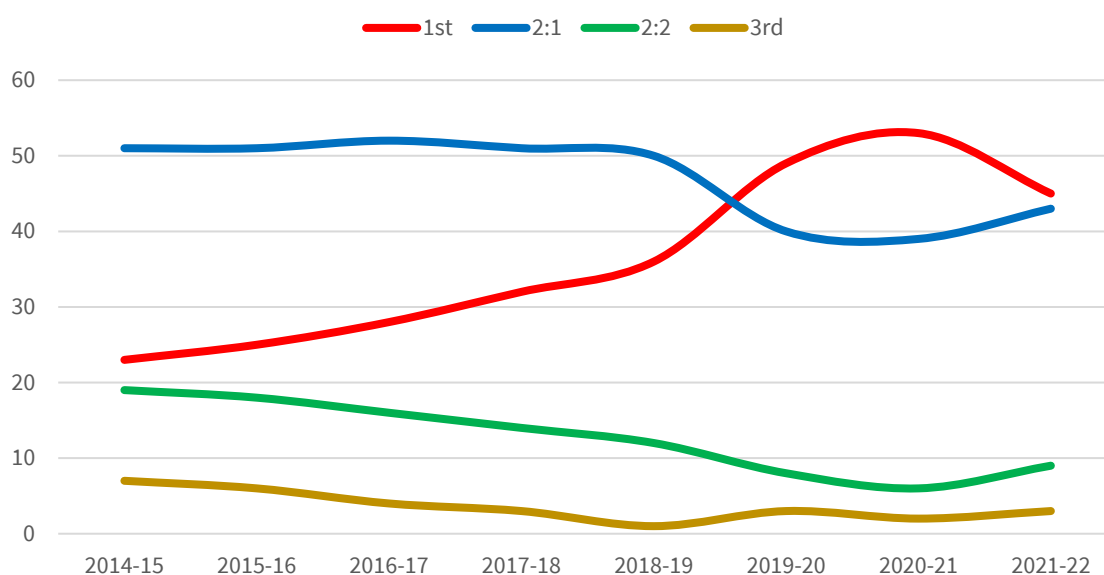
Deeper analysis shows that patterns vary somewhat in our three Faculties. The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences has already returned to pre-pandemic awarding levels. In 2018-19 89% of the Faculty’s students achieved ‘good honours’ classifications, and in 2021-22 that figure stood at 87%; the proportion of Firsts in 2021-22 matches the 2018-19 figure of 32%.

The Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry had 95% ‘good honours’ in 2021-22, down from 97% in 2020-21 but up from 2018-19 (92%). 50% of students achieved First Class outcomes in 2021-22, down from 66% in 2020-21 and close to the 2018-19 pre-pandemic figure of 48%. Our undergraduate medical and dental provision has justifiably higher outcomes within the University. A relatively small number of programmes that fall within the scope of the Degree Outcomes Statement (notably excluding the (unclassified) MBBS and BDS). Intercalated programmes constitute a significant proportion of the remainder; those are only normally open to students who have already completed a minimum two years of study and who are already performing at 2:1 or higher level.

The Faculty of Science and Engineering awarded 'good honours' outcomes to 90% of graduating students in 2021-22, down from a peak of 93% the previous year but higher than the 2018-19 level of 82%. 62% of students achieved First Class outcomes in 2021-22, and 28% 2:1s; in 2018-19 the figures were respectively 42% and 40%. There has been an increase in 'good honours' levels overall and a particular increase at First Class level, though with a 5% drop in Firsts since 2020-21. There are statistical differences between the schools that make up the Faculty, and mark distribution is a subject of ongoing discussion and review.

Queen Mary remains committed to ongoing scrutiny and review of its degree outcomes, and is confident that in the majority of areas 'good honours' levels will be at, or close to, 2018-19 levels in 2022-23. There are some subject areas where this may not be the case; our algorithms take account of all modules taken by a student and 2020-21 and 2021-22 results are locked into the profiles and cannot be amended. Should there be specific areas in which results appear out of line we will direct particular attention to the review of its procedures, but without disadvantaging students who have already completed elements of their studies under the legitimate policies and procedures in effect at the time.

Figure 2: classification breakdown



### Academic governance

Queen Mary University of London is an autonomous higher education provider that holds and exercises independent degree awarding powers and establishes its own educational policies and procedures with reference to sector regulation and guidance including the Office for Students' (OfS) [Conditions of Registration](#) and the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA's) [UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#), and [subject benchmark statements](#).

The Senate, subject to the overall superintendence of Council, has general responsibility for the academic activity of Queen Mary. The Senate delegates responsibility for the operation of matters relating to academic standards and the quality of the student experience to the Education Quality and Standards Board (EQSB). The EQSB is chaired by the Vice-Principal (Education) and includes representation from academic and professional services colleagues, and student representatives. It is serviced by the same team that services the Degree Examinations Boards, to ensure a strong link between policy and observed practice. The EQSB established a dedicated Assessment Sub-board in 2022 with a range of responsibilities with links to degree outcomes, including assessment design and integrity, ongoing review of our degree algorithms, and reviewing marking practices and grade descriptors.

The Degree Examination Boards (DEBs) have authority to approve awards. In most cases there is one undergraduate and one postgraduate taught DEB for each faculty, serviced by the Directorate of Governance and Legal Services for consistency of approach, including consistency of application of regulations and policies. Multiple school/institute-level Subject Examination Boards (SEBs) report to each DEB, each with external examiners. SEBs confirm marking, and progression outcomes. DEBs have a responsibility to ensure consistency and appropriateness of approach within and between the SEBs and review qualitative and quantitative reports on their outputs each year. DEBs and SEBs are chaired by academic staff with considerable experience in assessment. In 2022-23 Faculty-level groups comprising the Faculty SEB and DEB Chairs were established, providing a forum to reflect upon results and share good practice outside of the formal DEB meetings.

Queen Mary does not franchise its degrees or accredit degrees on behalf of other providers. Where we enter a partnership with another provider we conduct bespoke review exercises to establish commonality in standards, including marking criteria. Where appropriate, this includes a mark conversion scheme to draw direct equivalencies between the marks issued at Queen Mary and at the partner institution.

### Classification algorithms

Queen Mary degrees at level six are classified using a weighted aggregate mark held to one decimal point (the 'Classification Mark'). All three developmental years count towards this mark, with year one counting for 10%, year two 30%, and year three 60% (1:3:6 weightings). We believe that including the first year marks is important; we have a high proportion of students from non-traditional backgrounds and wish to ensure that they are given the maximum possible incentive to engage fully with their programmes and assessment from the start. This is balanced by the relatively low overall weighting given to the first year, as we also wish to recognise positive exit velocity. Students must take most modules in each developmental year at the corresponding academic level; having the final year count for 60% of the Classification Mark ensures that the degree outcome is properly reflective of material at the level of the award itself.

We do not practice discounting (outside of the [pandemic contingency measures](#)) – all 360 credits count towards classification. We use a single algorithm for each award rather than a 'best of two' or similar approach as we believe that consistency of approach is important. We amended our regulations for 2015-16 entry, significantly increasing the minimum requirements for award; at the same time, we harmonised the degree algorithms in use – previously some schools used 1:2:4 weightings and others 1:3:6. Universal adoption of 1:3:6 allowed for clearer regulations and had no material impact on degree outcomes – in percentage terms, the two algorithms are very similar (1:2:4 = 14:29:57% and 1:3:6 = 10:30:60%).

Our undergraduate Law award (LLB) operated on different regulations for many years, largely for reasons of historical practice. Since 2020-21 entry it has followed the same rules as the other awards offered at Queen Mary, and awards made in 2022-23 will be made on that basis. However, LLB classifications in this current Statement used a calculation under which the first year did not count for classification, and the second and third years were weighted equally; the LLB was classified on profile (how many modules at each grade) rather than a weighted mark. Certain of the LLB exceptions were linked in part to guidance and requirements from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). A very small number of other programmes have additional PSRB requirements linked to the award regulations – in all cases the exception results in a more stringent rather than a more lenient approach (this generally concerns minimum requirements to qualify for the award itself, rather than the classification algorithm).

Queen Mary operates a borderline classification policy. It is a wholly algorithmic system, but historically included limited scope for discretion where a student had approved extenuating circumstances that could not be taken into account elsewhere (that provision was removed following the publication of the UKSCQA's [Principles for Effective Degree Algorithm Design](#) in 2020). Students within 1.5% of a borderline

fall into a zone of consideration (except at pass/fail, where there is no borderline consideration). A student in the zone with half or more of their final year credits at or above the level of the higher classification will be raised into the next classification banding. Examination boards and external examiners pay particular attention to borderline cases; in the event of any concerns or unusual patterns of achievement the Degree Examination Board would intervene and, if appropriate, escalate this for consideration.

Students at Queen Mary have two attempts to pass each module, a first attempt and one resit of the assessment (without a repeat of the teaching). On resit, the module mark is capped to the minimum pass mark to reflect the fact that the student did not pass it at the first attempt. Where students have extenuating circumstances, they can be given additional attempts ('first sits') without penalty and without incrementing the attempt number; in rare cases a repeat of the whole module including teaching can be offered (a 'first take'). Queen Mary operates a 'fit to sit' policy; if a student attempts an assessment they cannot normally claim for extenuating circumstances against that assessment – this protects the integrity of the assessment as a measure of students' attainment.

Queen Mary's degree algorithms and borderline classification policy are available for students and other stakeholders to view in the relevant editions of the Academic Regulations, the Assessment Handbook, and in school/institute student handbooks.

### **Pandemic mitigation measures**

The coronavirus pandemic, beginning in 2019-20, necessitated review of our award and classification rules to protect students. We took robust steps to ensure that this was the case, while maintaining appropriate minimum standards. Queen Mary reduced the overall credit requirements for award to those we had used prior to our last review (pre-2015-16 regulations) for 2019-20 finalists. For all students we allowed discounting of the lowest scoring modules from 2019-20, recognising that students might be unable to engage with all assessments and/or unable to perform to the level of their ability due to disruption to their educational experience. We discounted the lowest 30 credits of marks from 2019-20 or (at the point of classification) the entire 2019-20 year, whichever gave the more favourable outcome. For 2019-20 'finalists' we excluded 30 credits in all cases, and never the entire year, recognising the importance of content at the academic level of the award and that the final year counted for 60% of the Classification Mark. These changes have largely worked through the system now, with reduced effects each year (as the year that is discounted has a lower percentage weighting for students who were in the first year in 2019-20 versus those who were in the second or third year). We also amended our borderline classification policy for 2019-20 and 2020-21 finalists, raising students who fell within 1.5% of a borderline and who had (a minimum) 15 credits fewer than half of all final year credits at or above the level of the higher classification. Reflecting on these accommodations we remain satisfied that they were academically appropriate in the extraordinary circumstances of those years and in the sector's period of uncertainty over the extent and duration of the impact of the pandemic on education. However, we have now moved away from those measures and would carefully consider our previous experiences and contingency regulations in the event of another emergency situation.

During the first years of the pandemic we also relaxed certain rules relating to extenuating circumstances, which resulted in more students than usual deferring assessments or interrupting their studies.

### **Assessment and marking practices**

Queen Mary's assessment and marking criteria are designed to ensure compliance with sector reference points, including the OfS' Conditions of Registration, PSRB requirements, and guidance documents such as the QAA's Subject Benchmark Statements and Quality Code for Higher Education; Queen Mary has conducted detailed benchmarking against all of those publications and is satisfied that our processes are fully in line with the recommended and required practices.

Assessments are designed to test the specific learning outcomes set out in programme and module specifications. Marking is always criterion- and not norm-referenced – marks are based on an individual student’s attainment measured against the marking criteria specific to that assessment. Queen Mary has generic grade categories at institutional level, and detailed marking criteria are set at school/institute level in accordance with relevant subject benchmarks - these may be generic to a whole school or tailored to individual assessments. Scaling of marks to meet expected ‘norms’ is prohibited, and scaling is reserved as a repair mechanism for ‘broken’ assessments, where a problem was discovered. Such scaling is rare and requires the approval of both the Subject and Degree Examination Boards.

Staff must be trained to mark and must do so in accordance with Queen Mary’s Code of Practice on Double Marking and Moderation. The Code ensures that at least half of the assessments for each module undergo quality assurance testing beyond the initial marking; this can be double-marking, where a second marker marks all submissions in full and the two markers agree a final mark, or moderation, where the second marker looks at a sample of scripts and determines whether the first marker’s marks, as a whole, are appropriate. Samples from across the range of achievement and in sufficient numbers to allow an informed judgement are then sent to external examiners for comment and to ensure that the marking is in line with Queen Mary’s expectations and norms for the sector and discipline. Subject Examination Boards have a particular remit to review module marks and trends, and there are several examples of good practice where schools have developed reporting mechanisms for this purpose, including the School of Geography and the School of Politics and International Relations where detailed records of longitudinal performance on assessments and modules are maintained. Queen Mary has invested in a business intelligence tool, PowerBI, with module mark reporting functions. This has been well received and offers powerful reporting to examination boards and to external examiners, who will be able to access this system directly. It allows for year-on-year reporting to show differences between cohorts on the same module, comparison between the results for the specified module and other modules taken by the same cohort, and isolation of individual students to compare results between modules and years.

Several schools use ‘stepped’ marking, using only certain numerical marks; this has tackled a historical unwillingness to mark above 70 that was identified internally and by external examiners. It has aided in decision-making, as markers can now focus on slightly broader grade descriptors when assigning marks rather than focusing on the difference between, eg, a 54 and a 55. The system has been well-received including by external examiners in their comments. It has sometimes resulted in more marks issued at the higher end. While we continue to monitor this, it does not present an issue for concern at this time and is the intended outcome of ensuring that high-performing students are recognised appropriately .

External examiners attend Subject Examination Boards and submit annual written reports to Queen Mary. These have been positive in relation to marking and assessment, and no issues of institutional concern have been raised. All reports are considered by the Directorate of Governance and Legal Services, which submits an annual report to the Education Quality and Standards Board. An ‘External Member’ – a senior member of staff with responsibility for academic quality and standards at another university – fulfils a similar role at the Degree Examination Boards, commenting on issues of process and the appropriateness and comparability between institutions of regulations.

During the pandemic Queen Mary amended its assessment methods, notably including a move to more assessments that could be delivered remotely. We supported this transition with expert working groups and procedures and retained and continue to develop many aspects of that provision. Like all institutions we faced some initial challenges with student behaviour in online assessments and continue to develop procedures to further increase the robustness and integrity of assessments, including the return to greater synchronicity in assessments, the development of guidance specific to online assessments (including guidance on where online assessment may not be appropriate), and a bespoke online training course on academic integrity made available to all students.

## Teaching practices and learning resources

We are engaged in continually developing our teaching practices and investing in our learning resources. Much of this work is led by, or draws on the expertise of, the Queen Mary Academy. In 2021, we co-created a new pedagogic approach, Active Curriculum for Excellence (ACE). In developing the ACE Approach, we worked with our students to bring together the lessons learned from educational experiences during the Coronavirus pandemic. Our focus was to reintegrate our community back into campus life enabling students to enjoy an active and engaging curriculum. The following elements underpin this pedagogic approach:

- i. student-paced learning activities – students can follow these at their own time and pace;
- ii. interactive large group sessions – these build on independent learning activities and provide an opportunity to test, progress and stretch students' understanding;
- iii. learning-by-doing sessions – these include tutorials, lab work, seminar debates, employability skills training, clinical training, patient treatment, Problem-Based and Team-Based Learning;
- iv. small active learning groups – provide an opportunity to both build up a small community of practice, and to enjoy peer-to-peer opportunities;
- v. co-curricular activity.

We place significant value on having qualified teaching staff. We have continued investment in the recognition, which has led to increases in the number of staff with teaching qualifications and fellowship. At the end of 2020-21, the percentage of academic staff with HEA Fellowships had risen to 65%, which is above the sector (58%) and the Russell Group (49%) averages. Since 2018-19, we have increased the number of staff with Associate Fellowship from 342 to 420, Fellowship from 940 to 987, Senior Fellows from 94 to 95, and Principal Fellowship from 12 to 17.

Since 2018, we have celebrated the achievements of our educators through the annual Education Excellence Awards and President and Principal's Prizes. 50 nominations were received in 2021 demonstrating how many of our staff are achieving excellence in education. The Awards and Prizes are a pipeline to external recognition. In 2021-22, two Queen Mary educators were awarded National Teaching Fellowships – both of whom had previously received our internal education prizes. They joined the fourteen other staff currently or formerly affiliated with Queen Mary who have achieved this recognition.

In 2021, we developed and launched the Student Enhanced Engagement and Development (SEED) Award to celebrate and recognise students' contribution to co-creation. Since launching the SEED Award launch, 47 students have received this recognition.

The funding of innovative educational strategic projects has also aided students in achieving to their full potential. The Westfield Fund for Enhancing the Student Experience, for example, has provided around £100,000 each year to projects across the institution to support the development of educational initiatives which are focused on enhancing the student experience.

To bring together our work to share and promote excellence in education, we launched the Queen Mary Festival of Education in 2020. This event is a successor to our previous annual Teaching Conference. As a larger event, the Festival of Education is one of the highlights of the year. It brings together both international keynote speakers, offering global perspectives, with presentations from our own students and staff. Through raising the profile of educational excellence, and disseminating excellent practice throughout the University, we are supporting students to achieve good degree outcomes.

## Learning Resources

Our Library Services Vision is to bring together the physical and digital learning resources, including e-resources and other services. Since 2018, we have invested in the development of a loan laptop service; this provides 204 devices which students can borrow for up to eight hours at a time. There has also been a significant increase in the scope of academic skills and information literacy provision, open to students across all disciplines. We are undertaking a Library transformation project, taking account of student feedback on the current provision and which is setting out to provide a journey to a higher-quality experience for students that meets current pedagogical and student needs. We have recently ring-fenced £80k per year to increase the number of e-textbooks to widen the range of digital resources students are able to access.

Across the University, we have over 100 areas which are used for student study space. We established a Study Spaces Working Group to promote the availability of these different spaces, and to determine common standards for them. Students at Queen Mary have access to our Mile End, Whitechapel and West Smithfield libraries, and can also access Senate House Library. The Library extension will create 500 new study spaces, which are additional to the other new spaces being created elsewhere on our campuses.

Across our London campuses, we provide a wide range of specialist teaching and learning facilities, including computer laboratories, teaching labs, clinical skills rooms, performance and rehearsal spaces, Bloomberg terminals, and a recently opened haptics suite for dental education. The University has made considerable investment in developing new educational facilities which support interactive, engaging, and collaborative learning.

Education is supported by a range of digital learning tools, including our lecture capture system, QReview. Our virtual learning environment (VLE) has benefitted from recent significant investment to improve stability by moving to cloud hosting, and we have also undertaken a refresh of the theme in response to student feedback. We have also deployed Blackboard Ally, which reviews content on the VLE for accessibility. Since 2020, we have made a significant investment in the development of Mixed Mode Education, for which we were shortlisted for an award by UCISA in 2022. Staff delivering Mixed Mode Education can use both MS Teams and Zoom, providing flexibility in the platform, and have access to training in the effective use of both platforms. MME is supplemented by a range of other digital pedagogies, including the use of *mixed-reality*, to provide students with new ways of experiencing practical activities. Principally this has been through using HoloLens technology in medicine and in chemistry.



## Appendix 1: tabular data on degree classifications

### Queen Mary University of London

Classification (%)	First	2:1	2:2	Third	'Good honours'
2021-22	45	43	9	3	88
2020-21	53	39	6	2	92
2019-20	49	40	8	3	89
2018-19	36	50	12	1	86
2017-18	32	51	14	3	83
2016-17	28	52	16	4	80
2015-16	25	51	18	6	76
2014-15	23	51	19	7	74

### Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Classification (%)	First	2:1	2:2	Third	'Good honours'
2021-22	32	55	11	2	87
2020-21	42	50	7	1	92
2019-20	39	51	8	2	90
2018-19	32	57	11	1	89
2017-18	27	59	12	2	86
2016-17	24	60	13	3	84
2015-16	20	59	18	4	79
2014-15	20	59	16	5	79

### Faculty of Science and Engineering

Classification (%)	First	2:1	2:2	Third	'Good honours'
2021-22	62	28	7	3	90
2020-21	67	26	4	3	93
2019-20	59	29	9	4	88
2018-19	42	40	16	1	82
2017-18	38	40	19	4	77
2016-17	31	40	22	7	71
2015-16	32	37	20	11	69
2014-15	25	38	25	11	64

### Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry

Classification (%)	First	2:1	2:2	Third	'Good honours'
2021-22	50	45	4	1	95
2020-21	66	31	3	0	97
2019-20	68	28	4	0	96
2018-19	48	44	8	0	92
2017-18	49	44	6	1	93
2016-17	35	61	4	0	96
2015-16	37	55	8	1	92
2014-15	32	66	2	0	98