

**DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT 2020**

**1 Institutional degree classification profile**

The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama is a highly selecting, specialist conservatoire in drama, awarding University of London degrees. Central’s undergraduate students have, over the last 5 years, received on average 80-90% good awards, in line with other specialist arts providers according to statistics published by the [Office for Students](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/analysis-of-degree-classifications-over-time/):

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Headcount****(rounded)** | **First Class** | **Upper Second Class** | **Lower Second Class** | **Third Class** |
| **2014/15** | 205 | 19% | 69% | 10% | 3% |
| **2015/16** | 200 | 26% | 63% | 11% | 1% |
| **2016/17** | 190 | 31% | 59% | 10% | 1% |
| **2017/18** | 225 | 27% | 61% | 12% | 1% |
| **2018/19** | 210 | 33% | 57% | 10% | 1% |

Having considered our data in terms of particular student characteristics, we have noticed the following trends over the last five years:

* There has been an increase in the award of good honours degrees for students with declared disabilities (32% of our total students) from 79% to 85%;
* Male and female attainment levels (33% and 67% of students respectively), whilst fluctuating, are broadly similar (both 84% in 2018/19). However, female student outcomes are more consistently higher with a higher five year average;
* Home and EU students (88% of our students) achieved higher overall outcomes than our international students (10% of our total students);
* While BME students earlier in the period under consideration achieved a higher average number of good honours awards, this has changed in recent years (from 88% to 75% over the last three academic sessions). Throughout this period, white students have continued to achieve an equal or higher proportion of first class awards than BME students on average, but are also a larger proportion of our student body (ranging between 74-86% of students over the last 5 years);
* Over the past 5 years, the average number of good honours awards has increased in contrast with our average tariffs on entry going down.

**2 Assessment and marking practices**

The School assures itself that assessment criteria meet sector reference points through the following key processes:

* The design and development of programmes with alignment to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), national credit frameworks and subject benchmark statements;
* All assessment being undertaken by full- and part-time contracted and trained academic staff;
* External examination of its programmes, which takes into account the standards outlined within the FHEQ and associated guidance on academic credit frameworks for providers within the United Kingdom;
* All degree weighted student assessments are double marked or moderated, and samples are considered by external examiners;
* The professional development of academic staff through engagement in subject communities, acting as external examiners, undertaking research and scholarship, engaging in professional practice and support for staff in attaining fellowship at all levels from Advance HE (formerly the Higher Education Academy) in recognition and development of their teaching practice.

The School appoints external examiners from other institutions across the United Kingdom to confirm that the School’s academic standards remain commensurate with national expectations, via participation in the Examination Boards where marks and awards are confirmed and through formal annual report. We have consistently received this assurance for undergraduate awards, and in recent years across levels it has been recommended to use marks at the higher end of the marking scale (which inevitably impacts on the number of students receiving first class awards in particular).

External scrutiny is also provided through the appointment of academics and practitioners working in related fields annual monitoring, periodic review and validation and/or revalidation of programmes, as detailed in our [Handbook of Quality Assurance and Enhancement](https://www.cssd.ac.uk/content/quality-assurance-and-enhancement).

**3 Academic governance**

Academic governance plays a pivotal role in protecting the value of our qualifications over time. The Examination Board is a sub-committee of the Academic Board, which also oversees the value, academic standards and quality of our awards via annual monitoring, periodic review and validation and/or revalidation of programmes, as detailed in our [Handbook of Quality Assurance and Enhancement](https://www.cssd.ac.uk/content/quality-assurance-and-enhancement). Academic Board provides an annual assurance to the Governing Body that it continues to manage and oversee the academic standards of awards and related quality of learning opportunities. The Governing Body, which includes an external academic member with significant higher education leadership experience who attends Academic Board, has consistently accepted this assurance.

As an awarding College of the University of London, Central submits an annual quality enhancement report for consideration by the University Academic Quality Advisory Committee and subsequently the University of London Collegiate Council.

**4 Classification algorithms**

Central’s undergraduate degrees are calculated using a single algorithm to calculate all final student marks:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Undergraduate Year** | **Credits** | **Weighting within Calculation** |
| Year 1 | 120 | 0% |
| Year 2 | 60 + 60 | 0% + 25% |
| Year 3 | 120 | 75% |

This algorithm is weighted more heavily towards the latter stages of an undergraduate programme as a result of the practice-focused nature of our specialist degrees, where student learning and development follows a non-linear, curving trajectory as their skills develop and they begin to connect different aspects of their abilities (in parallel with the development of their academic learning). Students and the public are able to identify which units contribute to this weighting via our programme specifications, which are published [online](https://www.cssd.ac.uk/), and for students this is re-emphasised within assessment grids made available to them via our internal virtual learning environment. The decision about which second year units contribute to a classification is set by Course Leaders and approved as part of the validation process.

Students are allowed a first attempt at every assessment, followed by a capped resit should they fail to reach the minimum passing mark (40%). Students can exceptionally be granted uncapped second sit, or in rare cases, a capped or uncapped third sit, as an outcome of a successful application to the School’s Mitigating Circumstances Panel. This is in line with sector norms.

The final classification of a student’s undergraduate award is determined using the above algorithm at the following thresholds, in line with common practice for English higher education providers:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of classification** | **Lower final mark threshold** | **Upper final mark threshold** |
| First class award | 70% | 100% |
| Upper second class award | 60% | 69.49% |
| Lower second class award | 50% | 59.49% |
| Third class award | 40% | 49.49% |
| Pass (non-honours only) | 40% | 100% |
| Fail | 0% | 39.49% |

All marks, including a student’s final mark, are automatically uplifted where a decimalised mean mark results in a mark that includes 0.5% or above (e.g. 59.7%). Our published [academic regulations](https://www.cssd.ac.uk/content/quality-assurance-and-enhancement) make provision for consideration of a classification where an overall mark is 2% or less below a classification band where an application for mitigating circumstances has been successful. The Examination Board may currently make decisions outside of this process, including for students without mitigating circumstances, where students are similarly close to a classification band, but any such decision must be made with the express support of an external examiner.

**5 Teaching practices and learning resources**

Three key enhancements have benefitted our teaching practices and learning resources:

* An increase in the number of academic staff and technical support staff with an accredited teaching qualification (including the successful recognition of two members of staff as National Teaching Fellows in successive years);
* An increase in the provision of support and adjustments for students with learning differences, disabilities and mental health needs as well as care leavers;
* Introducing more flexible methods of submission and feedback for students, such as: visual essays, major projects being a mixture of ‘artefacts’ or documentation of practice and writing, and formalising oral (and recorded) student feedback to more closely align with creative arts practice.

**6 Identifying good practice and actions**

External examiners in their reports have commended the School’s approaches to double marking and moderation, the quality of student feedback, as well as the consideration given to individual students through Examination Board processes.

We are undertaking two key actions this academic year:

* Analysis of student outcomes at the level of course, unit and assessment to consider potential causes of differential attainment;
* Finalising the development of revised assessment criteria and marking descriptors (at 10% intervals from 0% to 100%) which have already been scrutinised by external examiners for introduction in 2020/21.

**7 Risks and challenges**

As a highly selecting specialist drama conservatoire, a current risk to the outcomes of our students is the reduced presence of the arts more broadly within the secondary education curriculum. The School’s admissions processes and activities, including work around the country in areas of traditionally low higher education participation, utilise auditions and interviews as a mechanism to identify prospective students with the potential to succeed in their chosen programme of study. Often, the skills and attributes we identify have been developed through engagement in drama and related subjects during this pivotal stage in their educational (and personal) development.