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**DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT 2022**

**1 Institutional degree classifications 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:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Academic Year** | **Headcount (Rounded)** | **‘Good’ Honours** | **First Class Honours (1st)** | **Upper Second Class Honours (2:1)** | **Lower Second Class Honours (2:2)** | **Third Class Honours (3rd)** |
| 2016/17 | 200 | 200 | 85% | 29% | 56% | 9% |
| 2017/18 | 240 | 240 | 83% | 25% | 57% | 11% |
| 2018/19 | 230 | 230 | 83% | 31% | 53% | 9% |
| 2019/20 | 215 | 215 | 88% | 42% | 46% | 6% |
| 2020/21 | 230 | 230 | 90% | 42% | 48% | 4% |

There has been a reasonably consistent proportion of good awards made across our undergraduate degrees, with a rise in the proportion of first class awards . The exception to this is our Drama, Applied Theatre and Education programme which saw a variance of 17% over the past 5 years. Having reviewed these students’ outcomes from 2018/19 there is no single unit which impacts on overall performance and we are assured that this was a natural fluctuation based solely on the achievements of these students:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2015/16** | **2016/17** | **2017/18** | **2018/19** | **2019/20** |
| BA(Hons) Acting | 96% | 96% | 98% | 100% | 100% |
| BA(Hons) Drama, Applied Theatre and Education | 95% | 98% | 90% | 83% | 100% |
| BA(Hons) Theatre Practice | 77% | 69% | 71% | 75% | 75% |

Last year, a number of reflections were made with respect to attainment between students with particular characteristics. These reflections are updated for this 2022 statement:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Trend 2014/15-2018/19** | **2020/21 Update** |
| An increase in the award of good honours degrees for students with declared disabilities (32% of our total students) from 79% to 85% | 2020/21 saw an increase in the number of upper second class degrees for students with declared disabilities and a decrease in first class awards of 10%, however the proportion of ‘good’ honours remained at  87% |
| Female student outcomes are more consistently higher than male | Male students saw a 6% increase in first class awards and a 4% reduction in upper seconds, however the gap between male and  female good honours awards increased over 3%. |
| Home and EU students achieving higher overall outcomes than our international students | This trend has continued, with overseas students however achieving more first class and second class degrees than in previous years. We will move to look at Home, EU and international discretely now  following the change in fees. |
| BME students achieving a higher proportion of  good honours, with White students achieving a higher proportion of 1sts | BME students achieved marginally (<1%) higher degree outcomes  (90.7%), whilst male students continued to achieve a higher proportion of first class awards (44.6%) |
| Over the past 5 years, the average number of good honours awards has increased in contrast  with our average tariffs on entry going down. | We will conduct further analysis in the coming year on this metric to identify whether there are any particular courses or units where  improvement cannot reasonably be explained. |

**No Detriment:** In response to the sudden disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, a variation was enacted as part of our No Detriment policy to expand our ‘zone of consideration’ for raising degree classifications from under 2% to under 5%. Course teams reviewed students’ average outcomes before and after lockdown, and where there was agreed to be a demonstrable impact could recommend a classification raise on the basis of academic judgment (whilst the student’s mark remained the same). Fewer undergraduate students had their degree uplifted in relation to the impact of COVID-19 on their studies, 7% compared to 17% in 2020. This saw 5% of students raised from an upper second to a first class award, and 2% raised from a lower second to an upper second class award. Students continued to be impacted by hybrid, alternative provision during 2021/22 and will be considered under the No Detriment Policy. This has been stood down from the 2022/23 academic year as we returned to ‘normal’ pre-pandemic delivery. There were no undergraduate uplifts for 2021/22, and our ‘good’ awards have returned to pre-pandemic levels based on early analysis.

**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 sector recognised standards;
* All assessment being undertaken by contracted, trained academic staff;
* External examination of its programmes, taking into account the standards outlined within sector recognised standards 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 from Advance HE in recognition and development of their teaching practice.

The School appoints external examiners from other UK institutions to confirm that its academic standards remain commensurate with national expectations, via participation in the Examination Boards where marks and awards are confirmed and formal annual reporting. We have consistently received assurance for our 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 discipline areas (?) for periodic review and validation and/or revalidation of programmes.

**3 Academic governance**

Academic governance is pivotal in protecting the value of our qualifications over time. The Examination Board is a sub-committee of the Academic Board, which oversees the value, academic standards and quality of our awards via internal quality assurance processes. Academic Board provides an annual assurance to the Governing Body to demonstrate its ongoing oversight and maintenance of academic standards and quality. The Governing Body, including an experienced external academic member who also attends Academic Board, has consistently accepted this assurance. As an awarding College of the University of London, Central reports as required to the federation on quality, standards and outcomes. Central benchmarks its practice against key principles, including the [UKSCQA principles for effective algorithm design](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/field/downloads/2021-07/principles-effective-degree-algorithm-design.pdf) and [external examining](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/external-examining-principles).

**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 emphasises exit velocity of our undergraduate awards 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, 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, and accounts for rounding at 0.5% (e.g. 69.5% becomes 70%):

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **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% |

**5 Teaching practices and learning resources**

Three key enhancements continue to benefit 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 approach to double marking and moderation, the quality of student feedback, and in the past two years the success of the School’s responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in securing standards. We previously committed to reviewing degree attainment by mode of assessment and identified in particular that BME students achieved less well overall (in the sample year) in assessments where participation was directly assessed. This will continue to inform discussions as part of the School’s Portfolio Review process. This process will also, following disruption resulting from the pandemic, result in the introduction of revised assessment criteria and marking descriptors. We will also look to understand the difference in attainment between courses (despite this being consistent in the period under review), and revisit student outcomes and identify any particular areas within degrees where there are unexplained increases in first class awards. We have committed to reviewing our degree algorithm before the end of the 2023/24 academic year, and as previously noted have stood down our ‘No Detriment’ policy, and we anticipate that a return to pre-pandemic delivery and assessment will result in a return to pre-pandemic levels of attainment. Should data from 2022/23 indicate performance is still out of line, we will explore the reasons for this.

**7 Risks and challenges**

A growing 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 access and outreach activities, 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. Further, we acknowledge that with small student populations, fluctuations in numerical cohort size and overall outcomes can notably impact our overall proportions of awards.