Universities UK (UUK), with the support of GuildHE and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), are working on behalf of the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) to understand practices and methods used in UK higher education to classify degrees. This survey is intended to provide an update on sector activity since the 2017 report Understanding Degree Algorithms and to inform further engagement with the sector exploring effective practices in algorithm design.

UK higher education providers with degree awarding powers are being invited to reflect on their own institutional practices. We recommend you have your classification regulations and policies to hand for reference.

The survey is designed to collect institutional responses so we ask that you provide one response per institution, seeking feedback and information from relevant colleagues where appropriate.

A pdf of the survey questions is available to help you in gathering the relevant information to complete the questions. You also have the option to save your answers and return to the survey later, meaning you can complete the survey in stages and with colleagues.

Your answers will remain completely anonymous. The Universities UK privacy notice can be found on our website.
There will be an opportunity at the end of the survey to provide your name and contact details if you wish to be kept updated on future opportunities to engage in this work. The contact information you provide will be removed prior to analysis of the responses, ensuring institutional anonymisation in the research.

If you have any questions, please contact Universities UK on + 44 (0)20 7419 5612 or rowan.fisher@universitiesuk.ac.uk
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This survey is intended for providers with degree awarding powers. We would like to include providers without degree awarding powers in future elements of this project. If you are interested in being kept updated, please enter the survey and once you respond 'No' you will be directed to a page where you can provide contact details.
Questions about your institution

This survey is principally focused on the classification and algorithm practices set by institutions with degree awarding powers for bachelors with honours undergraduate degree programmes awarded at level 6 (England/Wales/Northern Ireland) or level 10 (Scotland).

To understand variation in practice and experience, the following section collects information about your institution and its undergraduate higher education provision.

In which country is the majority of your institution's undergraduate higher education provision delivered?  Optional

- England
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- Wales
- Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

How many undergraduate students are currently enrolled at your institution? (This number should correspond to the Higher Education Statistics Agency full-time equivalent student record for taught undergraduate students.)  Optional

- Less than 5,000
- Between 5,000 and 9,999
- Between 10,000 and 14,999
- Between 15,000 and 19,999
How many subjects, as categorised at the level of JACS 3.0 principal subject codes, does your institution currently deliver undergraduate provision across? (Please refer to programmes awarded at level 6 in England/Wales/Northern Ireland or level 10 in Scotland.) *Optional*

Please enter a whole number (integer).

How many undergraduate degree programmes does your institution currently validate for other providers? (Please refer to programmes awarded at level 6 in England/Wales/Northern Ireland or level 10 in Scotland.) *Optional*

Please enter a whole number (integer).

If you are responding for a Scottish institution, how many undergraduate students graduated from your institution in 2018/19 with 'ordinary/unclassified' degrees, as a percentage of all undergraduate students graduating?

Please enter a whole number (integer).
Questions about your practices for degree award classification

The next section considers your institution's current algorithm(s) and/or alternative calculation methods for the classification of degree awards and approach to their review. Unless specified otherwise, questions refer to undergraduate degree programmes awarded at level 6 (England/Wales/Northern Ireland) and level 10 (Scotland).

If you have changed your degree algorithms from 2018-19 to 2019-20 then please answer with your current regulations and not those which were in place last academic year.

Within your institution, what is the standard pass mark for undergraduate degree awards applied by your institutional practices?  *Optional*

- 30
- 40
- 50
- Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

For an individual student in your institution, what is the maximum number of distinct algorithms and/or methods used in initial classification of their degree award? (Please refer to the number of algorithms or approaches to which a single student's marks are subject prior to any further consideration through an exam board or borderline policy.)  *Optional*

- 1
- 2
If an individual student has their classification calculated through more than a single algorithm or approach, please provide details in the box below. Please include how the final classification awarded upon graduation is decided.

How many distinct degree algorithms and/or methods does your institution currently use across all its programmes in the classification of undergraduate degrees it awards and validates? (Please provide the total number.) Optional

How many degree algorithms and/or methods currently used in the classification of undergraduate degree awards within your institution are determined, wholly or in part, by the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies? (Please provide the total number, referring specifically to classification as opposed to accreditation.) Optional

If your institution uses more than one algorithm or method across programmes in the classification of undergraduate degree awards, which - if any - of the following are the rationale(s) for this? (Please select all which apply.) Optional
To meet PSRB accreditation requirements on specific programmes that differ from institutional practice
To account for variation in intended learning outcomes across subjects and disciplines
To account for variation in methods of assessment methods across different programmes
To match approaches across the sector for subjects and disciplines that differ from institutional practice
To reflect historical conventions within disciplines
To account for integrated masters programmes
To account for alternative undergraduate awards, for example higher degree apprenticeships
To account for courses which include a semester or year abroad or a year in industry
Our institution does not use multiple degree algorithms
Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

In which academic year did your institution last conclude an institution-wide review of its algorithm(s) and/or method(s) for classifying undergraduate degree awards? If you are currently in the process of a review, please state this as your most recent.

Optional

- 2018/19
- 2017/18
- 2016/17
- 2015/16
- 2014/15 or earlier
- We are currently in the process of a review
- We have never undertaken an institution-wide review (e.g. reviews are undertaken at a sub-institutional level)
- Don't know
- Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

Thinking about your institution's most recent algorithm review, whether institution-wide or at a sub-institutional level, which of these two options best describes the process?  *Optional*

- It was part of a wider review of academic practices and policies (e.g. including a range of academic regulations)
- It was a review specifically focused on degree classification algorithms and calculation methods

Thinking about your institution's most recent review, whether institution-wide or at a sub-institutional level, which of the following factors influenced the timing of the review? (Please select all which apply.)  *Optional*

- The institution operates a cyclical review of regulations and the review took place / is taking place in line with this schedule
- Recommendation / request from an external review process (e.g. from a QAA review and/or instruction from national funder or regulator)
- Recommendation / request from external examiner(s)
☐ Recommendation / request from a partner provider
☐ Recommendation / request from a PSRB
☐ Recommendation / request from the governing body
☐ Internal concerns about institutional grade profile among senior leaders
☐ Response to the UUK/GuildHE report 'Understanding degree algorithms' (2017)
☐ Response to the UKSCQA research on degree classification and statement of intent (2018/19)
☐ Gaining degree awarding powers
☐ Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

Thinking about your institution's most recent review, which of the following stakeholders have been, or are being, consulted with? (Please select all which apply.)  

☐ PSRBs
☐ Partner providers whose degrees are validated by the institution
☐ Student leaders (eg student union representatives)
☐ Student body (eg wider student consultation)
☐ Employers
☐ Academic staff
☐ Non-academic staff (eg quality and/or registry staff)
☐ External examiners
☐ Other

If you selected Other, please specify:
As a result of your institution's most recent review, whether institution-wide or at a sub-institutional level, has your institution made or is it planning to make any changes to its practices for the classification of undergraduate degree awards?  *

**Required**

- Yes
- No
- The most recent review is currently underway and the institution will consider changes once it reports
- The most recent review will be considered alongside our degree outcomes statement before making changes

Only respondents answering 'Yes' will be directed to the page 'Questions about your review of classification practices'. For those who do not answer 'Yes' you will be automatically directed to 'Questions about credits'. If you wish to offer further reflections on your experiences of undertaking a review, please use the open comment boxes towards the end of the survey.
Questions about your review of classification practices

If your institution has made or will be making changes as a result of the most recent review to algorithm(s) and/or method(s) for undergraduate degree classification, which – if any – of the following areas have been or will be affected in the process? (Please select all which apply) Optional

- Overall approach (eg changing to an arithmetic mean, modal approach, preponderance, grade-based classification, grade point average etc from another approach)
- The weighting attached to module/unit marks between years/levels
- The number of credits included in the final algorithm
- Rules on deciding the selection or omission of credits in the final algorithm
- Processes for handling borderline cases
- Rounding procedures
- Re-sit and re-assessment rules
- Mitigating circumstances policies
- Presentation of rules
- Presentation of rationale
- Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

If your institution has made or will be making changes as a result of the most recent review to algorithm(s) and/or method(s) for undergraduate degree classification, which - if any - of the following reasons were identified by your review? (Please select all which apply.) Optional
- To better reflect and classify the learning outcomes associated with our range of undergraduate degree programmes
- To standardise practice across the institution
- To change the distribution of classifications across degree outcomes (eg to reduce or increase the proportion of each classification)
- To match practices used by similar institutions
- To re-calibrate classification outcomes in line with similar institutions
- To support activity to address attainment gaps and better reflect learner needs
- To reduce the impact of academic discretion
- Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

If your institution has made or has planned changes to algorithm(s) and/or method(s) for undergraduate degree classification, has the potential impact on degree outcomes been modelled and estimated? Optional

- Yes
- No

If the impacts of the changes (or planned changes) have been modelled, please provide any details in the box below, for example what has been modelled and what might be seen (eg overall proportions, differences between students etc.)
Questions about credits

The following questions are designed to understand some of the specific classification practices in operation across your institution in the classification of undergraduate degree awards awarded at level 6 (England/Wales/Northern Ireland) and level 10 (Scotland).

If you have changed your degree algorithms from 2018–19 to 2019–20 then please answer with your current regulations and not those which were in place last academic year.

These should also be the classification algorithms for which the degree awarding institution is responsible for setting. In the case of PSRB accredited degree awards, if classification is determined by the institution's algorithm, please include these in your responses. If the classification is subject solely to external PSRB requirements, with no institutional input in algorithm design, please exclude these from your responses.

Within your institution, for the classification procedures in question, which of the following best describes the principal approach?  

- Aggregate percentage marks (weighted arithmetic mean)
- Profile of grades (modal average or preponderance)
- Combination of aggregate marks and grade profile
- Grade point average
- Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

For the algorithm(s) and/or method(s) in question, which student year groups are counted within the calculation for final classification of an undergraduate degree
award? (Please select all which apply.)  Optional

+ More info

- Year 1 - (Level 4 in E/W/NI, Level 7 in S)
- Year 2 - (Level 5 in E/W/NI, Level 8 in S)
- Year 3 - (Level 6 in E/W/NI, Level 9 in S)
- Year 4 - (Level 10 in S)
- It varies across degree programmes
- Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

If practice varies across programmes, please explain in the box below.

For the algorithm(s) and/or method(s) in question, what is the minimum number of credits used by your institution at each level included in the calculation when determining the final degree classification? Please exclude variation in cases of mitigating and special circumstances from your response.  Optional

- 120 credits
- 110 credits
- 100 credits
- 90 credits
It varies between programmes
It varies between levels
Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

If practice varies across levels or programmes, please explain in the box below.

If in your institution not all credits are included in the calculation when determining the final degree classification, how are the credits for inclusion selected? *Optional*

All credits are included
The 'best' credits are included, based on student marks
The highest and lowest marked credits are discounted
A random sample of credits are included
Credits are selected to reflect consistency in performance over time (modal/preponderance approach)
The selection of credits reflects exit velocity
Other

If you selected Other, please specify:
Questions about resitting and repeating modules

The following questions ask you to consider your institution's standard approach to resitting and repeating modules, for example where a student has failed. We understand that the application of mitigating circumstances policies can result in different outcomes depending on the nature of an individual case, so please do not include these in your answers.

If you have changed your degree algorithms from 2018–19 to 2019–20 then please answer with your current regulations and not those which were in place last academic year.

Within your institution, if a module is re-sat or repeated, which of the following rules are used to handle how subsequent 'new' marks feature within the algorithm or method for classification? (Please select all which apply.) Optional

- [ ] Failed elements are capped at resit, only affecting a proportion of a module mark
- [ ] Failed modules are capped at resit, affecting the entirety of a module mark
- [ ] Repeated modules are capped
- [ ] Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

Within your institution, is there a limit to the number of times a module or unit can be subject to re-assessment through resitting and repeating? Optional

- [ ] Yes
No

If you answered 'yes', please discuss how your regulations manage this process.

Within your institution, can undergraduate students resit or resubmit work for assessment for failed credits in the final year of study?  Optional

- Yes
- No
Questions about your degree classification practice rules

For the algorithm(s) and/or method(s) in question, is the weighting applied to each level the same for all algorithms or is there variation? For example, all programmes might be determined with a 30/70 weighted algorithm whereas in another institution algorithms might vary with a combination of some 30/70, some 50/50, and some 0/100 weighted methodologies. Your response can consider the weighting applied to levels within an arithmetic mean or alternatively the relative weight given to each level's unit marks when assessing preponderance or prevalence in a modal approach. Optional

- The institution has one algorithm which is used across all programmes, so the same weighting is used for all programmes
- The institution has different algorithms across programmes but the weighting is always the same
- The institution has different algorithms across programmes which use different weighting

Which of the following weighting options are used in your institution? (Please select all which apply.) Each option should be read as L4/L5/L6 - or in Scotland for four year honours degrees, L7/L8/L9/L10. The list is not exhaustive so please provide details of any further variants under 'Other'.

+ More info

- Even (33/33/33 or 25/25/25)
- 10/30/60 or 0/10/30/60
- 0/50/50 or 0/0/50/50
- 0/40/60 or 0/0/40/60
- 0/30/70 or 0/0/30/70
- 0/25/75 or 0/0/25/75
- 0/20/80 or 0/0/20/80
- 0/10/90 or 0/0/10/90
- 0/0/100 or 0/0/0/100
- Other
- N/A
If you selected Other, please specify:

Optional

Which of the following weighting options is your institution's only approach or most commonly used approach? Each option should be read as L4/L5/L6 - or in Scotland for four year honours degrees, L7/L8/L9/L10. The list is not exhaustive so please provide details of any further variants under 'Other'.  Optional

- Even (33/33/33 or 25/25/25)
- 10/30/60 or 0/10/30/60
- 0/50/50 or 0/0/50/50
- 0/40/60 or 0/0/40/60
- 0/30/70 or 0/0/30/70
- 0/25/75 or 0/0/25/75
- 0/20/80 or 0/0/20/80
- 0/10/90 or 0/0/10/90
- 0/0/100 or 0/0/0/100
- Other
- N/A

If you selected Other, please specify:

Optional

For the algorithm(s) and/or method(s) in question, which of the following best describes your institution's approach to borderline cases for degree classification?  Optional
The institution does not consider borderline cases at all
The institution considers borderline cases only through automatic arithmetic rounding within 0.5 of a classification boundary
Borderline cases are handled through a second algorithm (e.g., a borderline case may be uplifted where a second rule is applied such as preponderance or modal marks)
Borderline cases are identified through a second algorithm as eligible for review by an academic/examination board which makes the decision
Borderline cases are handled by an academic/examination board
Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

For the algorithm(s) and/or method(s) in question, if a borderline algorithm is used, what does it take into account? (Please select all which apply.) Optional

- The proportion or number of all included credits awarded overall marks over the grade boundary
- The proportion or number of credits in the final year (L6/L10) awarded marks over the grade boundary
- The mark awarded to a final dissertation/portfolio/performance
- The marks awarded to credits not included in the initial algorithm decision
- Other

If you selected Other, please specify:
For the algorithm(s) and/or method(s) in question, for an aggregate classification 'raw mark' - as calculated through an arithmetic mean - what is the maximum from a grade boundary that it can be to qualify for borderline consideration?  *[Optional]*

- The institution does not consider borderline cases
- Within 0.5 points
- Within 1 point
- Within 1.5 points
- Within 2 points
- Within 2.5 points
- It varies across programmes
- The institution does not calculate an aggregate mark (e.g. in a modal algorithm)
- Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

If your institution delivers programmes as integrated masters, how does the institution map these outcomes onto undergraduate classifications and awards processes?
Questions about presentation and publication

Does your institution publish on its website the technical rules of the algorithm(s) and/or method(s) it uses for degree classification?  

- Yes
- No

On what part of the website can these be found?

Does your institution publish on its website an explanatory rationale for the algorithm(s) and/or method(s) it uses for degree classification?  

- Yes
- No

Does your institution provide any additional student-facing information on the algorithm(s) and/or method(s) it uses for degree classification? (This could include classification calculator or a simplified summary, for example.)  

- Yes
- No

What kind of additional material do you provide?
Questions about sector-wide principles and practices

What elements of degree classification methodology, as set out within institutional algorithms and approaches, do you think could be explored from the perspective of sector-wide principles? (Please discuss in the box below.)

This survey has focused on a number of common areas of algorithm design where institutions make decisions. If you would like to provide details of any further practices and/or principles that operate within your institution, please use the box below.
Your contact details

Many thanks for engaging with this survey. We would be grateful if you could provide your contact details and institution to help monitor responses. These details will be separated from your responses for the purposes of analysis to ensure anonymisation of institutions.

If you are interested in finding out more about the research and future opportunities to engage with it, please let us know below if you are happy for us to use your contact details for this purpose.

If you are a provider without degree awarding powers and have not been able to participate in this survey, we will be ensuring opportunities for your engagement in future elements of this research so please leave your details if this is of interest.

Name

Job title

Email address
Institution name

Please let us know if you are happy for us to keep your contact details on file during the course of this research to be contacted about future opportunities to engage.  ★ Required

- Yes, I am happy to be contacted about future research opportunities
- No, I would prefer not to be contacted about future research opportunities
Final page

Many thanks for taking part in this survey. Your answers will support the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment to assess the action taking place across the sector and inform future conversations on effective algorithm practices.

If you have any questions, please contact Universities UK on +44 (0)20 7419 5612 or Rowan Fisher at rowan.fisher@universitiesuk.ac.uk.