Degree Outcomes Statement

1 Degree classification profile

Middlesex University is a collaborative, global learning community. We focus on three priorities: delivering transformational learning in technical, professional and creative education; creating impactful knowledge and research. Middlesex University has around 20,000 from 122 nationalities, of whom 25% are taught in our Dubai and Mauritius campuses. Of the 15,000 students studying in London, 1,421 are EU and 2,977 are international students. We work with partners in 26 countries to provide a high-quality education for a further 15,000 students. Each year around 4,500 students graduate with an undergraduate degree.

We are strongly committed to inclusivity and take a proactive approach to address the diverse needs of our student body (economic, social, cultural and ethnic). We have implemented extensive and evolving support systems to help our students to do well, whatever challenges they face. Factors such as high living costs, long and complex commutes and Global Majority disadvantage can create challenging conditions for our London students, where the majority study.
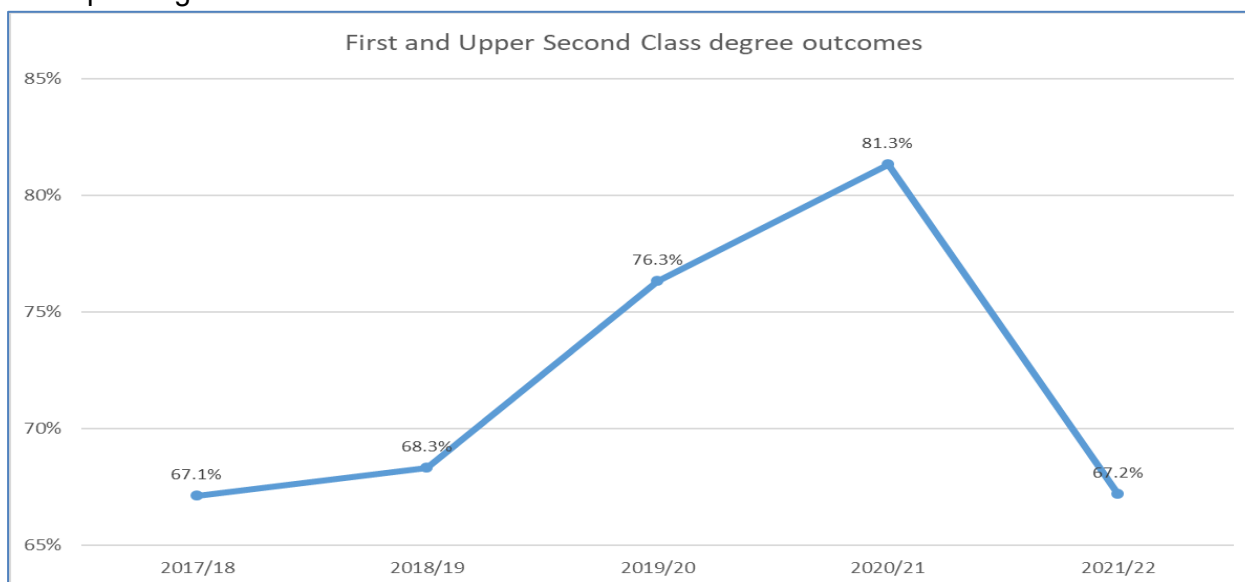
- 43.6% of Middlesex students are eligible for free schools' meals, compared to 18% across all OfS registered providers which is 25.6 percentage points difference.
- 76% of Middlesex undergraduate students are of the Global Majority are classified as BAME.
- One third of Middlesex undergraduate students come from deprived areas and are also the first generation from their household to enter higher education.
- Many of our students are commuters, with 76% of our UK students with commutes of more than 40 minutes and around half commuting for more than an hour.
- Nearly one in three (30.6%) enter with a BTEC qualifications, with Black students twice as likely as White students to have BTEC.

Therefore, this has, and continues to shape our activity in relation to degree outcomes, also referred to as attainment, more information on what we are doing can be found in our [Access and Participation Plan](#).

Over the last five years (academic year 2017/18 to 2021/22) there has been an increase of 0.1 percentage points in the number of students gaining a First or Upper Second Class degree classification, from 67.1% of graduates in 2017/18 to 67.2% in 2021/22. The number of First or Upper Second Class degrees awarded remains below the sector average by10.9 percentage points. This is reflective of Middlesex University's success in ensuring standards of our awards are maintained and hold value over time.

Middlesex University also has a focus on value added through educational gains to support our students to grow or establish their own businesses and compete effectively in the graduate employment marketplace. This reflects the starting point of many of our students and our support we provide over the duration of their degree to develop belonging and employability, academic progress, and supporting mental and physical health.

During this period there were significant increases in the number of First or Upper Second Class degrees awarded in 2019/20 and 2020/21, 76.3% and 81.3% respectively. These years coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic and no detriment policies which were put in place to support students. Analysis shows that this increase, which is consistent with the sector trend, was due to the modified degree classification algorithm and also polarisation of student outcomes impacting the overall ratio of First or Upper Second Class degrees. The overall number of First or Upper Second Class degrees remained relatively static in absolute terms with the proportion achieving a lower second class or third decreasing with a corresponding increase in deferrals and fails.

First and Upper Second Class degree outcomes

Year	Percentage
2017/18	67.1%
2018/19	68.3%
2019/20	76.3%
2020/21	81.3%
2021/22	67.2%

Analysis of different student cohorts demonstrates that there are a number of characteristics which impact on the achievement of First or Upper Second Class degrees, such as mode of study, ethnicity, socio-economic background, subject, qualifications on entry, and whether a student comes from the UK or overseas. Outcomes by characteristics vary over time and the combination of students with one or more of these characteristics impact on the overall degree outcomes for Middlesex University.

With 87% of our students falling into one or more widening participation groups and the high degree of intersectionality that exists, there has been focus on universal measures which support all students in both improving continuation and attainment, as well as some of this activity being specifically targeted at reducing the award gaps between student groups. We've also reviewed the importance placed on English proficiency in assessment and supported colleagues with workshops on the University's approach to embedding it and guidance on how to give feedback on it in assessments to support students.

Degree outcomes for graduates from Middlesex's overseas campuses are broadly in line with those at our North London campus. There have been increases at our Dubai and Mauritius campuses as the support for students and curriculum changes come more in line with those at our North London campus. This is an area which will be kept under review as provision develops.

Students at validated partners are slightly less likely to get a First or Upper Second Class degree, 64.1% for those graduating in 2021/22. For franchised partners they are more likely to get a First or Upper Second Class degree, 81.3%. Overall analysis on trends is not possible due to the change in partnerships and the curriculum they offer and therefore detailed analysis of degree outcomes for collaborative provision is carried out on an

individual provider level through Middlesex's annual monitoring and review for partnerships, which has not highlighted any causes for concern.

2 Assuring standards

Academic standards and quality of Middlesex qualifications are governed by our Academic Regulations and assured via our policies and processes contained within our Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook (LQEH).

The Assurance Committee has oversight of the effectiveness of implementation of quality procedures and academic regulations, and receives reports on all key quality and regulatory activities. Assurance Committee reports to Middlesex's Academic Board which in turn reports to the Board of Governors.

Programme proposals are first approved at faculty level, so as to ensure that the proposed programmes are compatible with faculty plans, and that only sound proposals are put forward for approval. They are then reviewed by the University Portfolio Development Committee to ensure alignment with the University's strategy. If approved, programmes then move to the validation stage where it is established that programme standards are appropriate, and that the quality of the student experience can be assured. A key element of both the validation and review process is the externality provided by External Assessors on the panel teams. The University also actively encourages the involvement of professional bodies in the validation or review process. The validation and review panels ensure programme and module learning outcomes, and therefore assessment criteria, are aligned with external reference points such as QAA subject benchmarks statements, Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and national standards laid down by any relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB).

The security of assessment is assured by a clear assessment process, which is supported by guidance provided by Academic Registry. This process includes internal and external moderation to support the consistency of marking, the later overseen by our External Examiners. Centrally run appeals and extenuating circumstances processes also ensure consistency of the student experience.

The External Examiner system is one of the principal means whereby the University maintains central oversight of the ongoing maintenance of programme standards. The Academic Quality Service appoints and monitors the performance of External Examiners, receives and reviews their reports and reports to the Assurance Committee on the External Examiner system.

Student achievement is monitored in a number of ways including consideration at assessment boards, as part of the educational monitoring and enhancement (EME) process, and by the University's Learning and Teaching Committee. Most partners follow the University's assessment regulations and any variations are approved by the Academic Registrar.

A reflective view of quality and standards is provided by the EME process which draws different sources of academic quality data together, and which allows the University to identify and address standards and quality issues at programme, departmental, faculty or University level. EME also provides a vehicle for identifying good practice for University wide dissemination. Middlesex undertakes a parallel process of educational monitoring and enhancement review (EMER) for partners to assure standards and identify good practice in these relationships.

A long-term view of standards and the achievement of students is provided by six-yearly reviews, which report on the continuing validity of the curriculum aims and outcomes, content, assessment, teaching and learning methods, as well as on student achievement.

In addition to Middlesex's standard review processes we are currently undertaking a review of our learning framework to ensure we deliver a sustainable, flexible undergraduate portfolio that has the potential to grow our student numbers at scale while retaining quality and standards. This includes a greater use of programme based and authentic assessment, alongside a review of student workload to ensure they are assessed appropriately.

This statement has been produced by Middlesex's Academic Quality Service with input from across the institution and use of external experts. It has been approved by our Academic Board and the Board of Governors, who have reviewed it in conjunction with a detailed report reviewing degree outcomes for the institution.

3 Classification algorithms

The University uses a non-linear grading scale mapped to classification bands, therefore degree classifications are determined by the distribution of credit volume across classification bands. The non-linear grading scale creates distinct grade boundaries and largely removes the need to consider borderline cases.

A student's classification is considered under two methods, grade distribution across levels 5 and 6, and also separately across level 6 only with students being awarded the higher classification if they are adjacently ranked. On the rare occasions where different classifications are not adjacent, the Assessment Board will use discretion to determine the classification. This is the only discretion Boards have in determining the classification. The classification calculated under each method requires a minimum of 50% of attained credit to be in that classification band (or higher classification band).

This method of classification allows a student to benefit from demonstrating 'exit velocity' through high performance in their final year yet also demands some consistency across both levels 5 and 6.

This algorithm is available to staff and students on the University's internal website and is embedded within the University Regulations (section E3.4) published on the outward facing webpages. Students are also provided with information on classification as part of wider information they receive on assessment throughout their programme of study.

This algorithm has been reviewed periodically, most recently in June 2018, since its implementation in 2008/9 but remains unchanged. During the Covid-19 pandemic the algorithm was temporarily modified as part of our No Detriment policy for students. For the academic year 2019/20 students were awarded their classification on the best 120 credits achieved across level 5 and level 6 rather than the full level 5 & 6 profile, or level 6 only profile. For the academic year 2020/21 Assessment Boards reviewed module grades against the achievements of students prior to the pandemic and upwardly adjust where there are significant differences to grades.

4 Enhancement activity

In 2008/09 Middlesex introduced a Learning Framework, which in addition to non-linear grading scale and current classification algorithm, focused on addressing underperformance in non-continuation and attainment. Since its introduction there has been an iterative approach, building on best practice and using pedagogical innovation. This whole provider strategic approach has been to embed successive strategies, including Our Strategy 2031: Knowledge into action which sets out our purpose of 'to create knowledge and put it into

action to develop fairer, healthier, more prosperous and sustainable societies potential into success'.

Initiatives have been both pan-university and programme led, allowing for adaption and testing across our diverse curriculum. In addressing non-continuation and attainment we have strengthened the following priority areas of intervention:

- Pre-enrolment access to resources and support to ensure students have realistic expectations of their programme and the skills/resilience to deal with university study;
- Support for academic writing and guidance to enable students to develop a solid understanding of academic integrity, plagiarism and University expectations;
- Personalised academic support and tracking of engagement through learning analytics to ensure timely and targeted support for students who are not engaging with their studies;
- Access to online learning support for each module to offer individual pathways for students who may have to cover additional ground and provide an online community which facilitates engagement of part-time, mature and commuting students;
- Peer support through our Student Learning Advisor (SLA) scheme to support students who feel more comfortable seeking advice from their peers;
- Practice-based pedagogy to ensure students with different educational backgrounds and strengths benefit from a range of learning interactions and assessment types;
- Changes to curriculum and assessment that address the learning needs of students with vocationally orientated qualifications such as BTEC;
- Creation of an inclusive learning environment that respects equality and diversity and draws upon the rich knowledge and life experience of students;
- Proactive wellbeing initiatives and access to expert support to encourage students to proactively tackle stress and seek help for mental health issues.

5 Good practice

There have always been areas of excellence across Middlesex with Departments and Programmes which have systematically and consistently addressed non-continuation and improved attainment, as well as reduced any gaps between student groups having overall higher levels of attainment. These areas have seen less of an increase in the number of students obtaining a First or Upper Second Class degree classification. These Departments and Programmes have tended to be those with strong links to PSRBs, an embedded approach to pedagogical scholarship and a practice based approach to assessment which engages a range of student skills and strengths.

As Departments and Programmes have started to embed strategic interventions they have seen increases in the number of students gaining First or Upper Second Class degrees and this effect can be tracked over time.

6 Ongoing approach

Middlesex's has an organisational focus on ensuring student from any background thrive and achieve which at the heart of the implementation of our current Strategy, 'Strategy 2031: Knowledge into action'. Closing the award gap to 5% or less is one of our KPIs and is regularly reported to our Board of Governors and University Executive Team. It is through this and the objectives for student success set out in our Access and Participation Plan that we will keep under review our degree outcomes.

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