

SENATE

Title of paper: Analysis of degree outcomes

Main purpose of the paper: For information

Presenter(s): Professor Ruth Valentine

Date of paper: 20 November 2025

Purpose of the paper

The report provides a summary of the degree outcomes.

Relation to strategy and values

Education Strategy

Recommendations:

None

Consultation to date (including any previous committee consideration and its outcome):

The report has been considered by University Education Committee.

Report to University Education Committee (UEC)						
20 November 2025						
Analysis of Degree Outcomes						
Summary:	This report provides a summary of degree outcomes. The report also provides an update on the OfS publication regarding Bachelors' degree classification algorithms.					
Background:	The Committee has a responsibility to Senate to monitor educational provision in terms of compliance with the expectations of the OfS (B conditions), supporting all students to succeed including in relation to commitments made in the Access and Participation plan. This report focuses on degree outcome data and the committee would receive the data to support monitoring of the APP at a later meeting.					
Relation to Strategy:	Education Strategy					
Resource Implications (People, Time, Money):	N/a					
Equality Analysis undertaken (if Yes, please attach; if No, please justify)	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	n/a					
Governance Trajectory:	Degree outcomes data is routinely reported to Senate.					
Resolution Required:	UEC is asked to consider and discuss the findings of the analysis.					
Approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	Endorsement/Recommendation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Information
Risks and Implications Included	Yes		<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Is the paper to be closed? (If yes, please state the reason below):					Yes/No	
Author(s):	Janice Trewick, Education Policy Manager					
Date of paper:	11 November 2025					

Sector update

Office for Students: Bachelors' degree classification algorithms

1. On the 6 November 2025, the OfS published a report on [Bachelors' degree classification algorithms](#) to address the risks in the design and use of algorithms for classifying bachelors' degrees following investigations into three higher education providers relating to compliance with condition of registration B4: Assessment and awards, which requires that awards are credible, reflect student achievement and retain value over time.
2. The OfS had observed significant grade inflation over time, with the first class and upper second class awards rising from 15.8% in 2010-11 to 37.7% in 2020-21, although this fell to 28.8% in 2023-24. The OfS state that whilst they would expect the numbers of students receiving first and upper second class to increase as providers improve their teaching and delivery, they have been concerned that improved teaching might not fully explain the increase and that algorithm design changes may have contributed to the increase.
3. The three investigations found that all three providers were at increased risk of breaching condition B4 due to algorithm steps that discount lowest marks or award the best results from multiple algorithms.
4. The practices of a) discounting credit with the lowest marks or b) awarding students the best results from different algorithms should no longer to be used. Providers who intend to implement or continue the use of either practices are required to notify the OfS by 31 July 2026. As these practices are not used in the award and classifications of degrees, we would no notification is required to OfS by the stated deadline.
5. OfS have introduced two new mandatory reportable events which providers need to report:
 - a. That it has made a change to a bachelors' degree algorithm that its modelling shows will result in an increase in the proportion of first class or upper second class degrees awarded.
 - b. That it has made a change to a bachelors' degree algorithm such that a new algorithm includes a step to determine a classification by the best result from multiple algorithms, or to discount credit with the lowest marks.
6. Where a provider makes any changes to an algorithms they are expected to undertake a calibration exercise by someone external to the provider.
7. The report relates specifically to undergraduate bachelors' degrees, however, condition B4 applies to all awards that are in scope of the regulation. The content of the report is also relevant to other awards where algorithms are used.
8. UEC are asked to note the new reportable events.

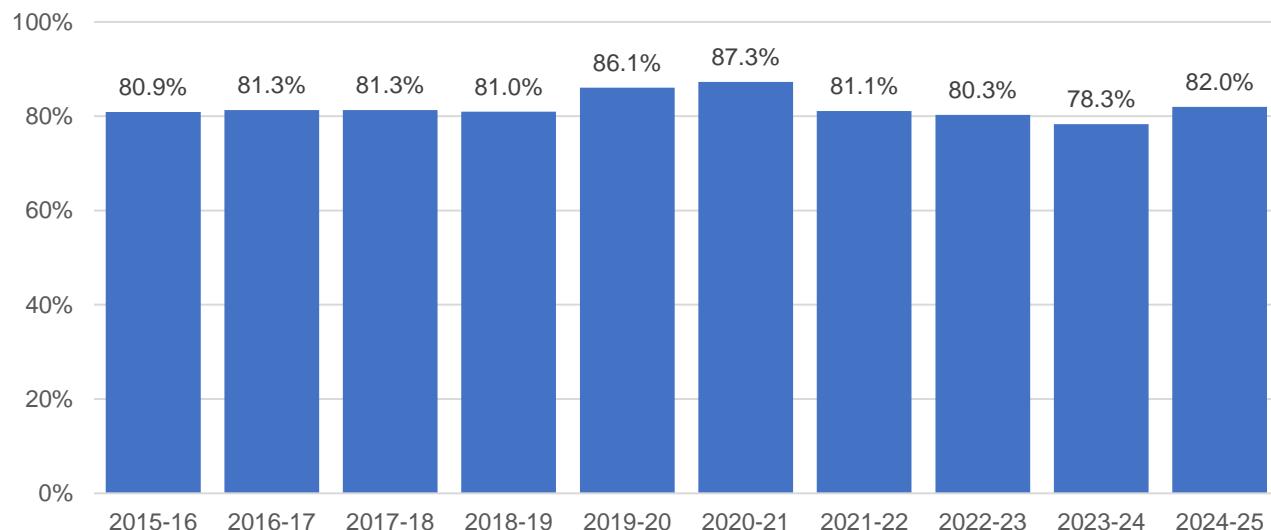
Degree outcomes: trends over time

- Under Condition B4 of the OfS Conditions of registration states that that 'relevant awards granted to students are **credible** at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously'. Part of the definition of '**credible**' is 'the number of relevant awards granted, and the classifications attached to them, and the way in which this number and/or the classifications change over time and compare with other providers.' Therefore monitoring patterns of degree awarding over time and reviewing when there are noticeable changes is a key part of meeting condition B4.
- This report uses internal data drawn from the Student Experience Journey Dashboard (and some historic data from previous reporting) and does not exactly match that published by HESA/OfS due to timing of reporting and other factors. The data presented relates to awarding patterns for Honours classified degrees (Level 6 and 7) and covers our full undergraduate population, UK and international domicile (fee status).

University

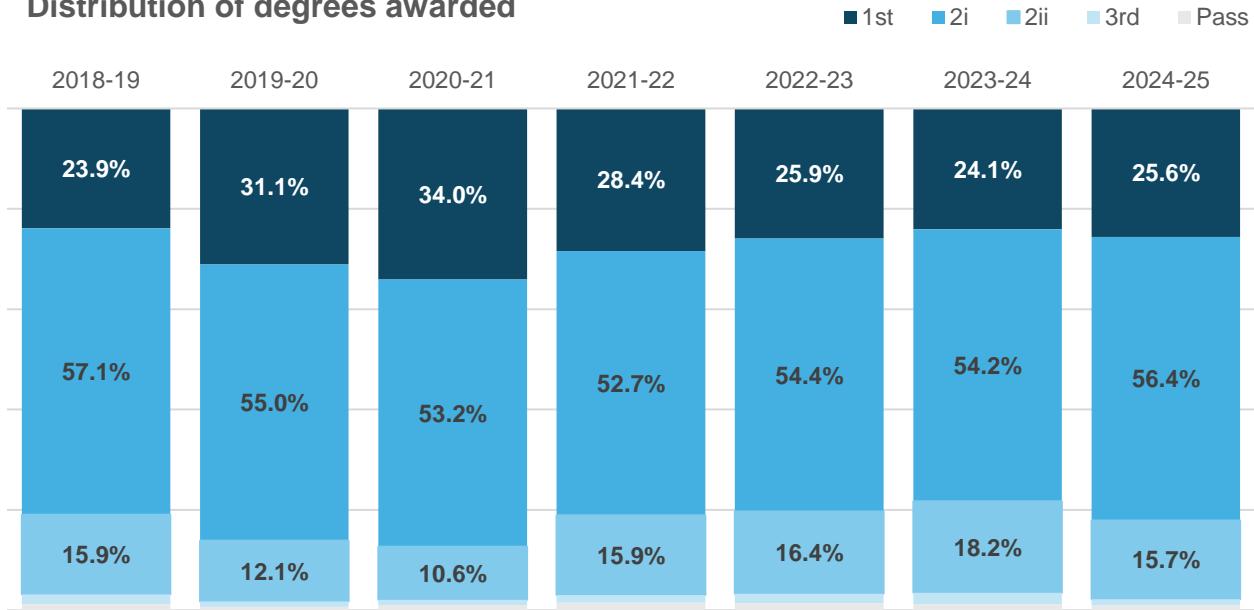
- Following a change in awarding patterns during the years affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2023-24 there was a gradual decline in the proportion of 1st and 2i degrees awarded to the second lowest level in the last 10 years. The decrease in 2023-24 was the third successive year it had fallen. However, in 2024-25 there was a reversal of that trend and there was a 3.7% increase in the number of degrees awarded.

1st & 2i class degrees awarded



- The breakdown below shows the increase of 1st class degrees awarded in 2024-25 is 1.7% higher than the last pre-pandemic year and 1.5% higher than the 2023-24 academic year.

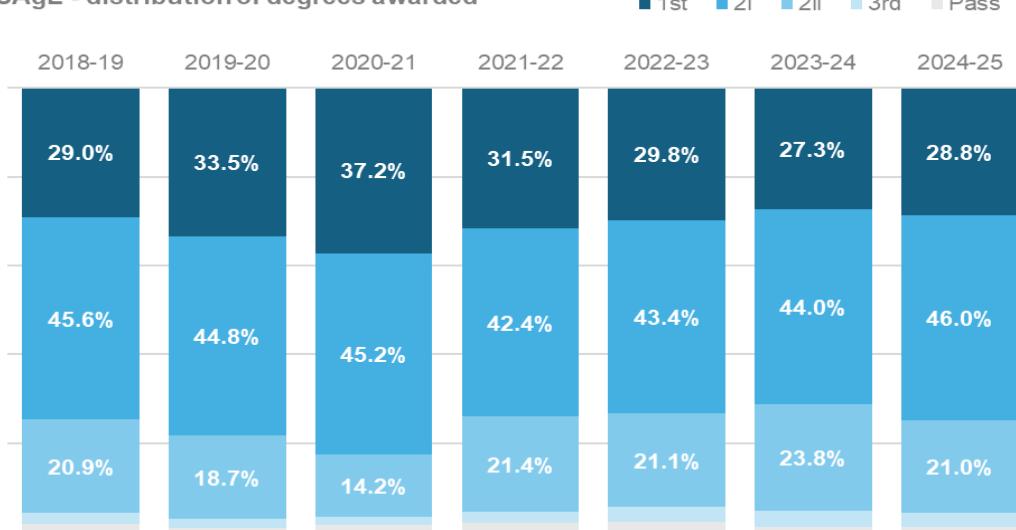
Distribution of degrees awarded

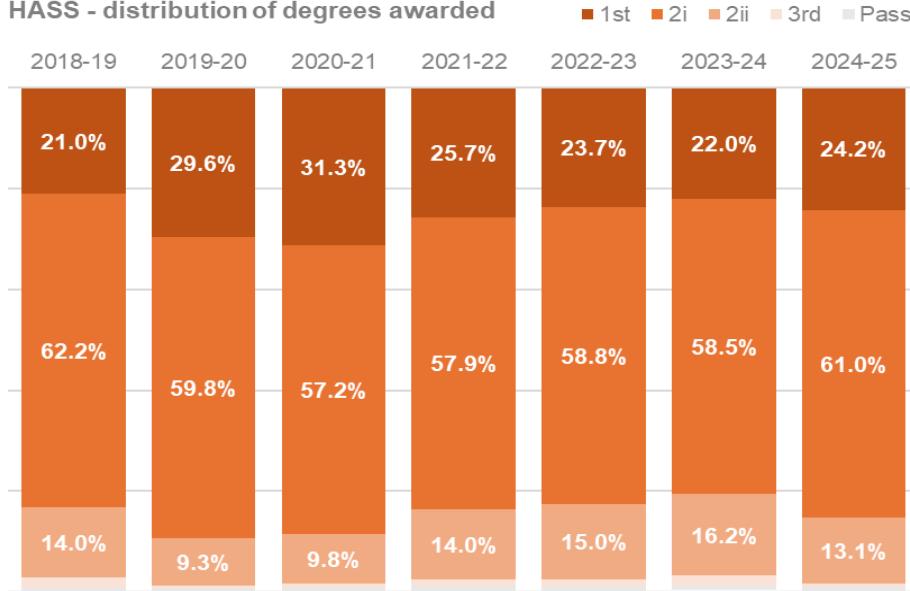
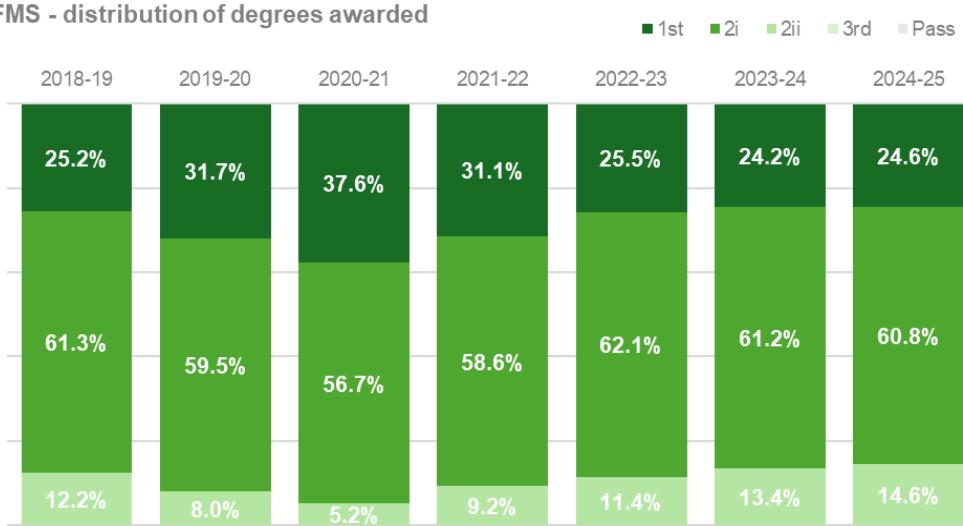


Faculty

13. As with 2023-24, similar patterns can be seen across the faculties, with SAGE and FMS awarding a lower proportion of 1st class degree compared with 2018-19, and HASS seeing a greater increase but starting from a lower base.

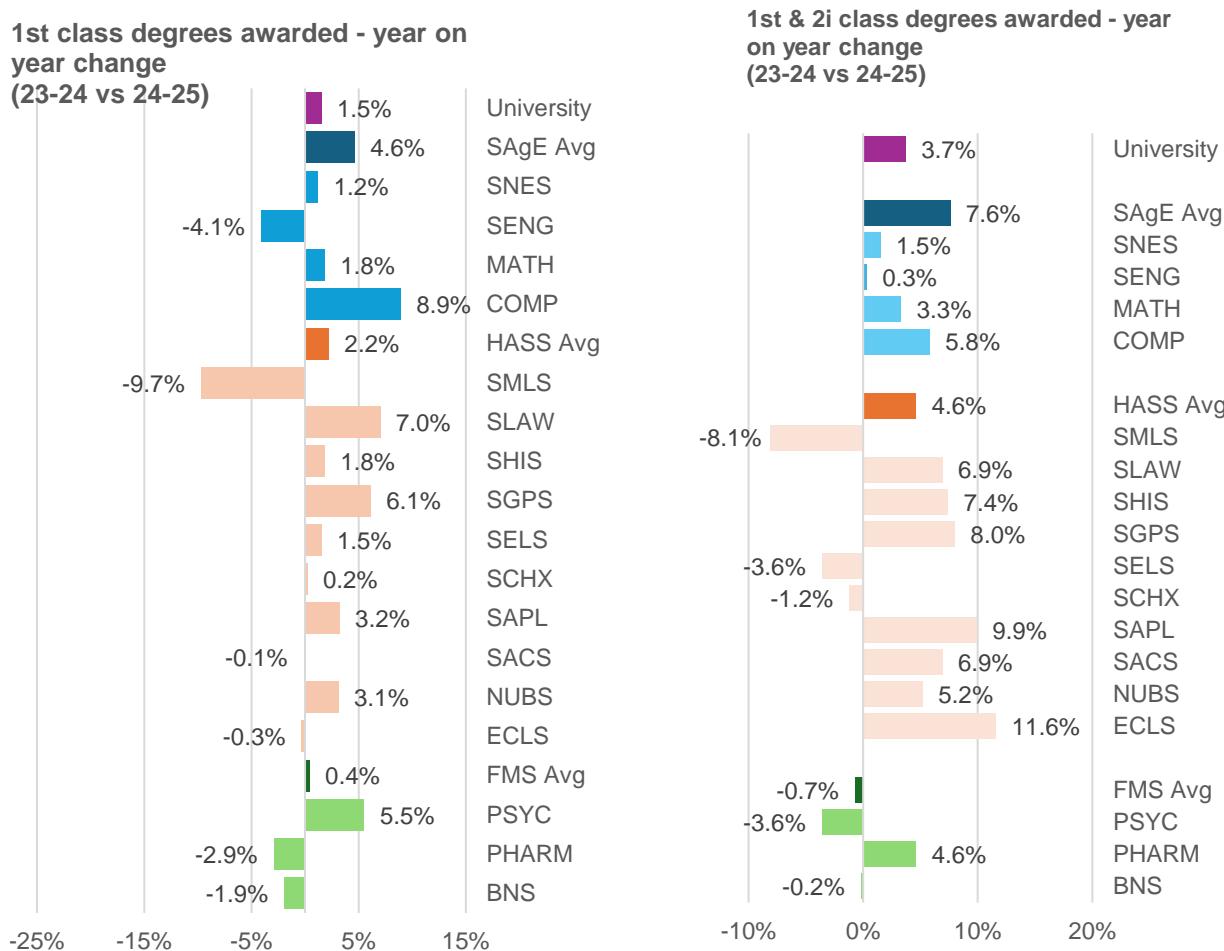
SAGe - distribution of degrees awarded



HASS - distribution of degrees awarded**FMS - distribution of degrees awarded**

School

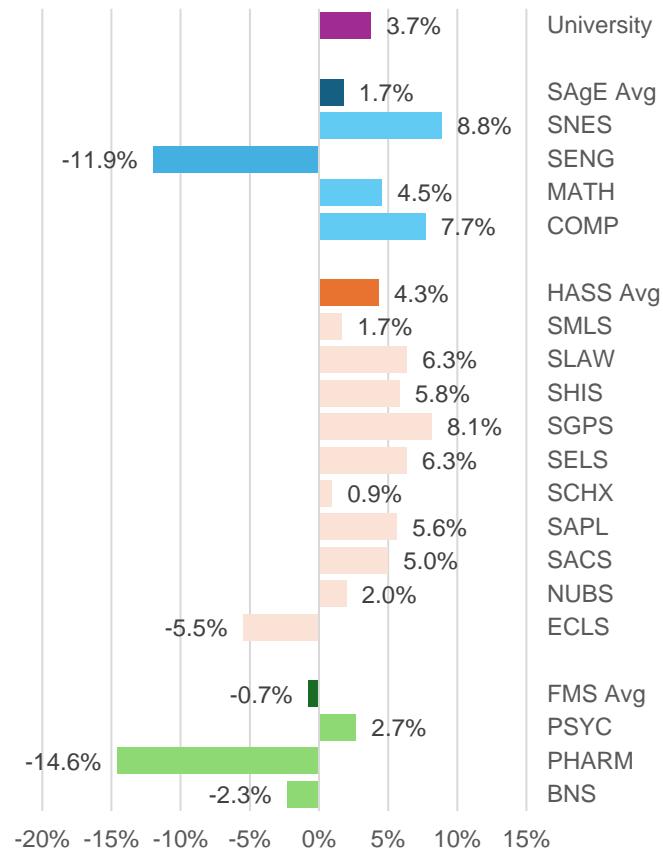
14. Nearly all academic units show an increase in the proportion of 1st class degrees awarded in 2024-25 compared with 2023-24, contributing to the overall increase at University level.



15. The graph below shows the comparison of 2024-25 results at 1st with the four year average ending in the last year of results not affected by the Covid-19 pandemic (2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19). A four-year average makes some allowance for the year to year variation that naturally occurs in awarding patterns whilst creating a reasonable benchmark with which to compare any given years results. Looking at the pattern of results over time a 5% +/- in any years results to the baseline average is a reasonable starting position from which to identify changes in awarding patterns that are worth reviewing.

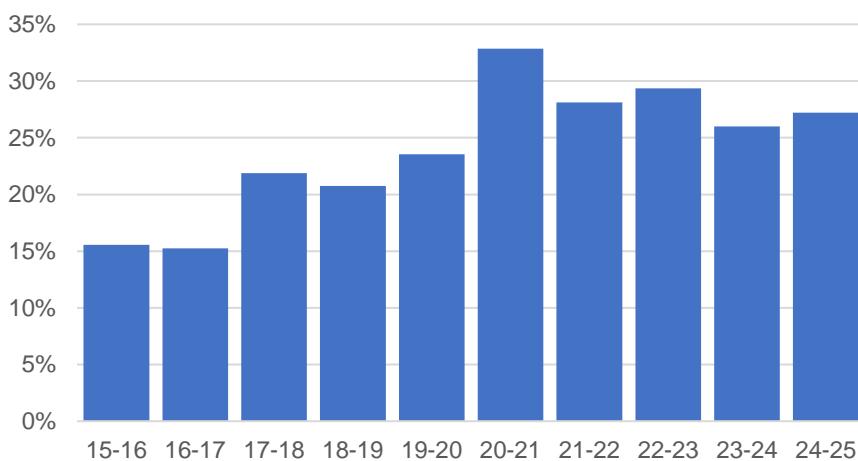
16. This analysis shows that in the 2024-25 the majority of academic units were outside of a 5% +/- tolerance level. In 2023-24, there were only five academic units which were outside the 5% +/- . More detail is provided below for the long-term awarding patterns for those academic units who are above 7%.

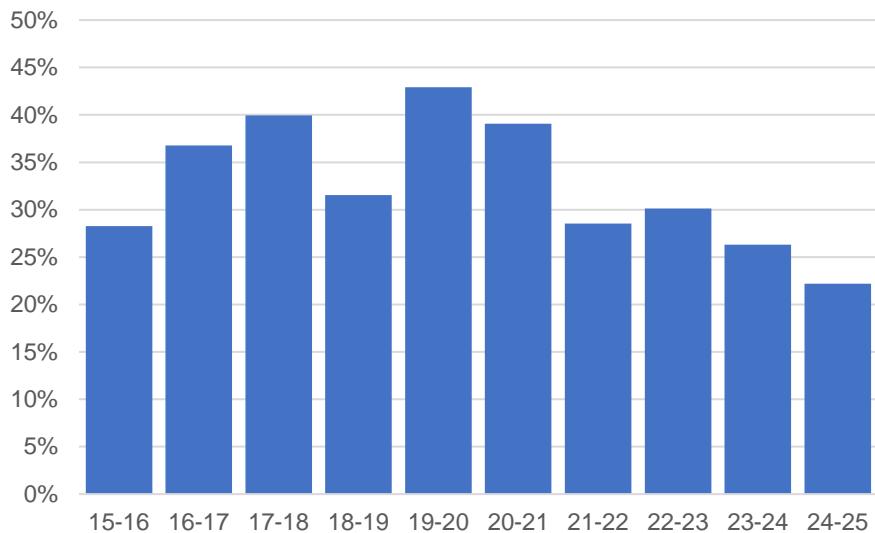
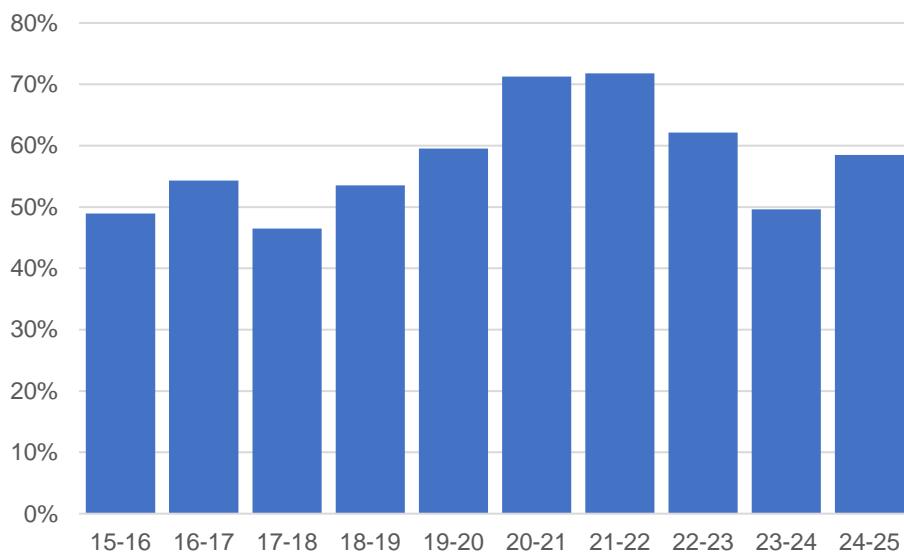
**1st class degrees awarded - 2024-25
vs Pre covid 4 yr avg**

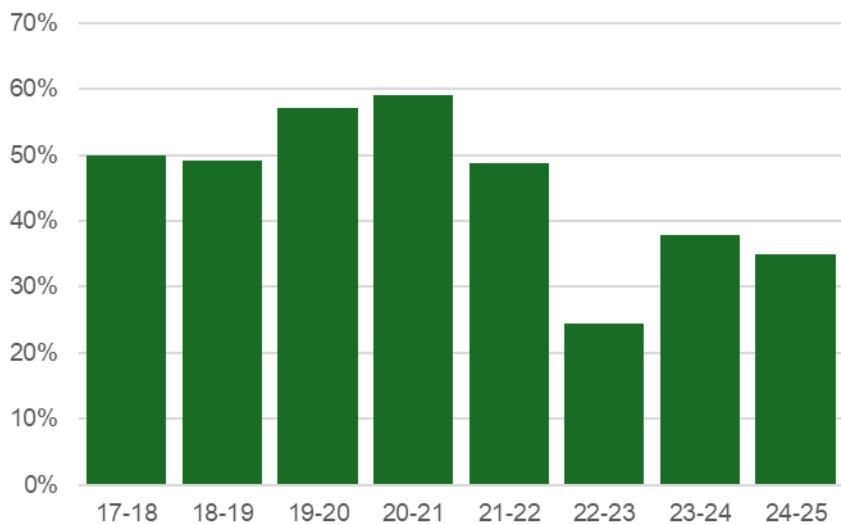
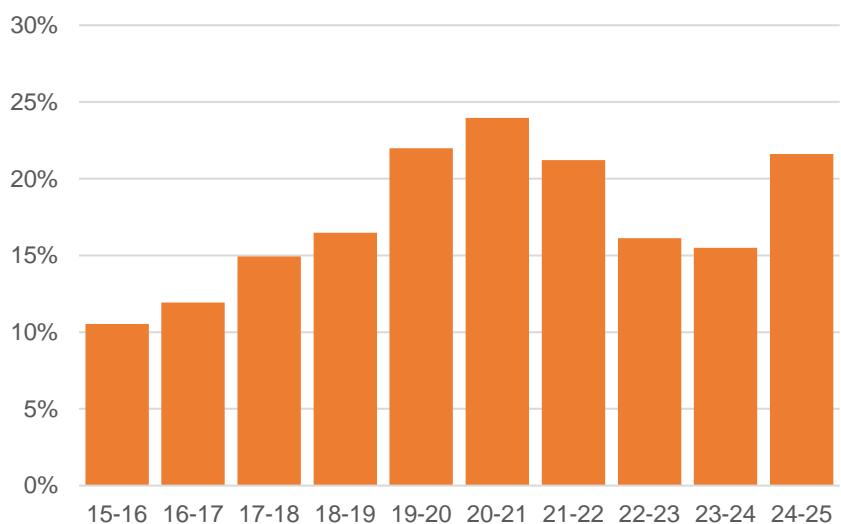


17. Further details are provided for five academic units where the difference from pre-covid is +/- 7% over a 10 year period. Those with the biggest declines are SENG -11.9%, Pharmacy -14.6% and those with the increases are SNES +8.8%, COMP +7.7% and GPS +8.1%.

SNES - % 1st awarded 2015-16 to 2024-25



SENG - % 1st awarded 2015-16 to 2024-25**COMP - % 1st awarded 2015-16 to 2024-25**

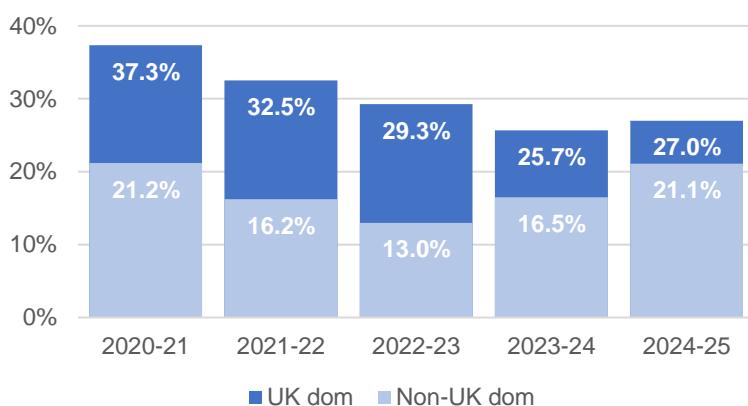
PHARM - % 1st awarded 2017-18 to 2024-25**GPS - % 1st awarded 2015-16 to 2024-25**

Degree outcomes: International domicile awarding gap

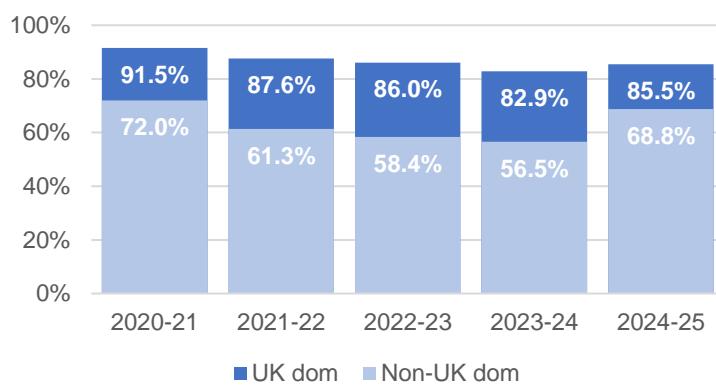
18. A comprehensive assessment of performance of the UK domicile awarding gaps was undertaken as part of preparation for submission for the 2025-26 to 2028-29 APP. Monitoring against the awarding gaps included in the APP objectives and targets is provided in Section 5. The wider assessment of awarding gaps will need to be revisited periodically but it has not been completed as part of the 2023-24 reporting. This section therefore focuses on the international domicile student awarding gap.

19. In examining the differences in awarding patterns between groups of students with different characteristics, for many groups, numbers of students are too small to look at patterns over time. The following charts present a 5-year aggregate across a range of student groups. In reading the charts note a 'positive' gap shows gap in achievement between the first and second group.

1st awarded UK dom & Non-UK dom



1st & 2i awarded UK dom & Non-UK dom



Non-UK dom vs UK dom						
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Gap 1 st	16.30%	16.14%	16.29%	16.29%	9.16%	5.9%
Gap 1st & 2i	23.0%	19.5%	26.3%	27.7%	26.3%	16.7%

20. The gap between Non-UK domicile vs UK domicile students had been remarkably stable through the Covid affected years and up to 2022-23, however the data for the past two years shows a narrowing of this gap for 1st. The gap between 1st & 2i also shows a reduction.