



DEGREE OUTCOMES
STATEMENT 2020/21
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The Royal Academy of Music moves music forward by inspiring successive generations of musicians to connect, collaborate and create.

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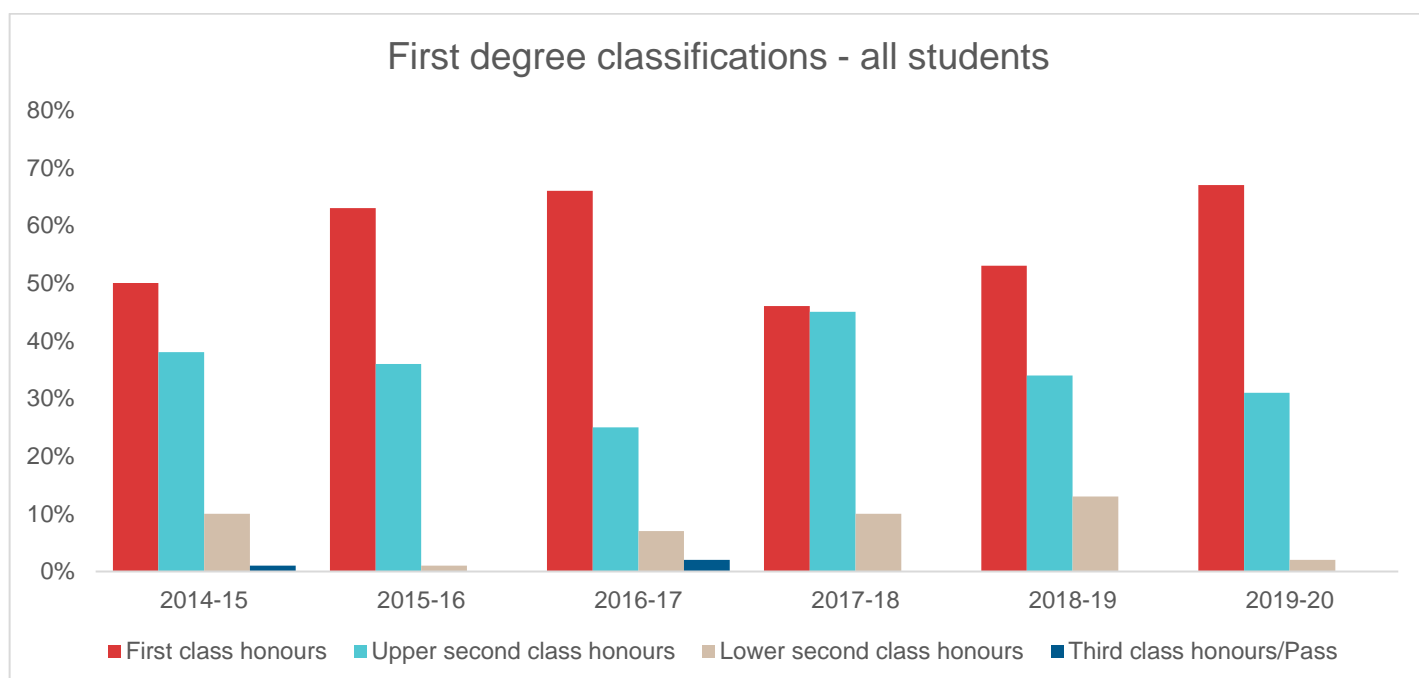
ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT 2020/21

The Royal Academy of Music is one of the world's leading conservatoires and a member institution of the University of London. Demand for student places is very high, as is our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. The Academy's admissions policy is selective, based on musical achievement and potential regardless of the background of the applicant. The Academy currently awards BMus degrees of the University of London.

We are committed to protecting the value and integrity of the degrees that we award, to meeting the requirements of the UK Quality Code, and the Office for Students' ongoing conditions of registration.

INSTITUTIONAL DEGREE CLASSIFICATION PROFILE

The data below represents degree outcomes across the Academy's BMus Standard and BMus Jazz courses, both of which are well established (running for 10+ years) and comparatively small in terms of cohort size. Our BMus curricula blend strong academic education with intensive high-level training for the realities of today's music profession. The courses have strong industry links and are delivered by expert teachers with experience of working at the highest levels of the profession. Students are supported by a strong tutorial system, which ensures that they balance the academic and professional-training components of the course with a clear view to their future employment.



	Headcount (rounded)	Good degree	First class	Upper second class	Other classes
2014/15	85	88%	50%	38%	12%
2015/16	70	99%	63%	36%	1%
2016/17	90	91%	66%	25%	9%

2017/18	90	91%	46%	45%	9%
2018/19	120	87%	53%	34%	13%
2019/20	85	98%	67%	31%	2%

We monitor trends in the classification of undergraduate degrees on an annual basis. The BMus Examination Board analyses degree classification data from the previous five years and External Examiners are asked to comment on the results of the current year in relation to the existing data.

While we award a consistently high number of first-class and 'good degrees,' we are confident that this is not a result of grade inflation. The evidence for this will be presented in detail over the following sections of this report, though in summary, we believe that the trend in the classification awards of our undergraduate degrees is best explained by the following factors:

- Competition for places is very high (in an international market) and growing; and because it has a world-wide reputation, the BMus course tends to attract very talented, ambitious and highly motivated students.
- The four-year, intensive experience, consisting mostly of one-to-one and small-group tuition, coupled with regular exposure to the highest professional artistic levels, enables our students to realise their full potential.

ASSESSMENT AND MARKING PRACTICES

The design, development and review of our courses is undertaken with close reference and alignment to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), national credit frameworks and the Music subject benchmark statement.

Under normal circumstances all written work contributing to a student's degree is either blind double marked or systematically moderated. All practical work is assessed by an expert panel including an independent specialist external assessor in the specific instrumental discipline. This comprises a second layer of externality to complement holistic oversight by the courses' External Examiners.

We made some adjustments to the curriculum and assessment regulations during the Covid-19 pandemic in order to continue our educational delivery; to ensure appropriate standards in learning and teaching and that adequate assessment was available. Some examples of changes made to assessments are as follows:

- Written work replaced by a class participation mark
- End of year recitals replaced by marks assigned by Head of Department on the basis of a Principal Study teacher's report on the student's work throughout the year.
- Written exam replaced by equivalent timed online assessment
- In-class test replaced by a seven day take-away paper
- Live performance replaced by video recording submission

All students were invited to submit a COVID-19 Self-Declaration Form, which was made available to the Examination Board in determining the award so that exceptional circumstances and students' experiences could be taken into account.

The External Examiners were consulted on the above changes and all reported subsequently at the Examination Boards that they were content with the level of care and flexibility that had been applied in making these changes.

External examiners and specialist external assessors are required to report formally on the comparability of standards between the Academy and other similar institutions, and to comment on the scaling of marks to performance standards. Over the last three years, external examiners and specialist external assessors have consistently noted the maintenance of the demands of our undergraduate courses, the standards of students' achievements, and the quality of assessment.

Additionally, many members of academic staff at the Academy are external examiners and specialist external assessors at a wide range of comparable institutions in the UK and bring that experience to bear on their role as assessors at the Academy.

ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

Our frameworks of academic governance protect the value of our degrees over time. The Examination Boards are sub-committees of Academic Board, which also oversees the value, academic standards and quality of our awards via annual monitoring, periodic course review and approval of new courses. Governing Body has oversight of Academic Board's continued management of academic standards of awards and related quality of learning opportunities. All of these processes which underpin our academic governance are contained within the [Quality Assurance Procedures](#).

External examiner reports are discussed by the relevant Examinations Board and the relevant Programmes Board. They form a key evidential component of the Annual Monitoring Process and Periodic Review of the BMus courses. In the last two periodic reviews of our undergraduate courses, the review panels have given detailed consideration to the fitness for purpose of the shape of the curricula, the academic demands of the courses and the rigour of their assessment frameworks. Each of these reviews has assured us of the rigour of our courses and the standards of our awards. Nevertheless, each of these reviews has resulted in the introduction of greater academic challenges within the respective course, in particular to historical musicology and professional development strands.

As a member institution of the University of London, the Academy submits an annual quality enhancement report for consideration by the University Academic Quality Advisory Committee and subsequently the University of London Collegiate Council.

CLASSIFICATION ALGORITHMS

The Royal Academy of Music's undergraduate degree classifications are calculated using a single algorithm that has been in use since 2010.

The Academy uses a weighted average percentage mark to determine degree classifications. The classification boundaries are:

Classification	Average percentage mark
First-class honours	70 and above
Second-class honours, upper division	60 to 69
Second-class honours, lower division	50 to 59
Third-class honours	40 to 49
Fail	0 to 39

The Academy's undergraduate degrees are structured as set out below:

Year	Level	FHEQ level	Credits	Classification weighting
Year 1	B1	HE Level 4	120 credits	0%
Year 2	B2	HE Level 5	120 credits	16.7%
Year 3	B3	HE Level 6	120 credits	33.3%
Year 4	B4	HE Level 6	120 credits	50%

To be eligible for the award of an honours degree, students must pass 480 credits.

Marks at B1 (HE Level 4) are not used in the calculation of a degree classification. This is in line with common practice and reflects that fact that the degree is practitioner-focused and the classification reflects the increased acquisition of skills and abilities as students progress on and complete the course.

To calculate a degree classification, an average percentage mark is first calculated for each of the remaining levels: B2, B3 and B4. To calculate the average percentage mark at each level, individual module marks are weighted according by the credit value of the module. Module credit values are set out in the relevant BMus Handbook. The average percentage mark at each level is then weighted as set out above to calculate the overall average percentage mark.

The rationale for attaching more weight at honours level (B3 and B4) is that the degree is a training as a professional practitioner in the performing arts and the classification reflects the skills acquired by the end of the course. Student learning and development follows an upward curve as they begin to connect aspects of their knowledge, skills and ability.

As is common for other HE providers, special provision is made where the overall average percentage mark falls within the boundaries of degree classifications. Where an overall average percentage mark is within 0.5% of the higher degree classification band (for example, an average percentage mark of 69.5% to 69.9%), an automatic upgrade to the higher classification will normally be made *unless* there is a good reason not to do so.

A good reason might include a Final Recital or Composition Portfolio mark that is more than seven marks below the higher classification band. Where an overall average percentage mark is within 0.9 to 0.6 of the higher band (for example, 69.1% to 69.4%), the examiners will use discretion and refer to the Final Recital or Composition Portfolio marks and the assessed

professional development activity marks to decide whether the student should be upgraded to the higher band.

In terms of resits, our Regulations allow students two attempts at any assessment under normal circumstances. Resit attempts are normally capped at the pass mark of 40. Where there are mitigating circumstances, students may apply to defer examinations or request extensions to deadlines in advance of the assessment or deadline. If there were mitigating circumstances that they were unable to make known before an assessment which they believe impacted their mark or caused them to either miss it or fail, they can make an appeal via the academic appeals process once the Examination Board has ratified their mark.

TEACHING PRACTICES AND LEARNING RESOURCES

The core components of the Academy's programmes of study are mostly taught individually or in small groups. All students follow a core curriculum comprising one-to-one tuition in the student's principal study discipline and a series of academic studies classes designed to develop students' knowledge and critical skills. The remainder of the core contact hours are taken up by a series of artist development classes, which focus on the development of skills specific to the students' discipline.

One of the key purposes of the academic studies components is to foster our students' intellectual and artistic independence. To that end, academic studies teachers are expected and encouraged to blend their own research and scholarship into their teaching, as well as reflecting on broader developments in musical scholarship and research. Because of the very high standards in student performance, many academics incorporate into their research collaborative work with students.

In addition to the core components of the curriculum, a key aspect of the students' experience at the Academy is a busy schedule of artistic projects, working with coaches, conductors, composers and directors who are leading members of the music profession. Most of these projects lead to public performances, contributing to the Academy's annual programme of over 500 publicly accessible events.

The Academy's main Library contains over 200,000 items, including remarkable collections of performance materials. The orchestral library has approximately 4,000 sets of parts, continually augmented with new acquisitions. Students can also apply for access to the University of London Library at Senate House and the British Library.

IDENTIFYING GOOD PRACTICE AND ACTIONS

We have begun to analyse entrance standards, monitored through the marking of a thorough and rigorous audition and assessment process, and to track the attainment of students from audition through each stage of the course under they receive their final award. Early indications are that while the most outstanding candidates at audition have historically been likely to gain a first-class degree, enhancements to our student support structure over the last 10 years have increased the value-added to the next layer of applicants, enabling some of them to improve their attainment from upper-second to first level. At the same time, as competition for places on

the course has risen, so have the entrance standards of the weakest students in each cohort. This, in turn, has boosted the number of students who eventually receive an upper second.

A notable area of good practice is our work on 'Artist Development'. This provision combines a range of talks and seminars designed to develop students' core artist skills, self-knowledge and professional awareness. They cover a comprehensive range of practical subjects, including preparing professional documents, auditioning, funding applications, working with online content, personal recording techniques, self-employed finances, how to get teaching work and how to practise effectively.

We consider students' creative and career options, with talks and workshops on effective concert programming, orchestral life, working with promoters, and producing and creating your own projects. We engage with health and wellbeing concerns for musicians, inviting speakers who are experts on injury prevention and psychological resilience.

RISK AND CHALLENGES

As a small specialist institution, a prominent risk to the outcomes of our students is the external position regarding music as it is represented within the school system. We have witnessed over a number of years a worrying decline in the availability of A-level Music in regions of the UK, with 60% of all A-level entrants from students in POLAR quintiles 4 or 5.

Our aim is to identify and implement effective ways to enable talented candidates from under-represented groups to regard the Academy as an obvious place in which they can study, and to put provision and support in place prior to application to enable them to gain entry, as set out in more detail in our Access and Participation Plan.