

Degree Outcomes Statement

1 Degree classification profile

Middlesex University has over 24,400 students studying across its four campuses in North London, Dubai, Mauritius and Malta. There are also over 16,600 students studying a Middlesex University award with one of over 75 partner institutions in the UK and overseas. Each year around 4,500 students graduate with an undergraduate degree.

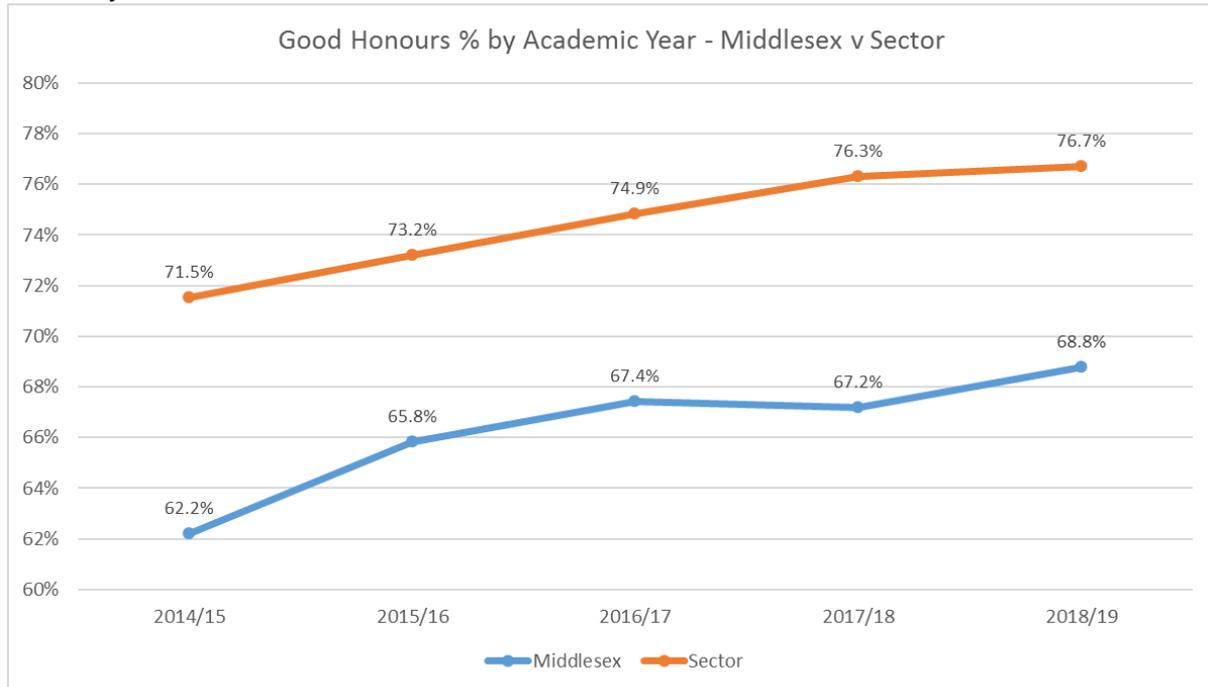
At our North London campus, where the majority of our students study, Middlesex's entry profile for under-represented groups significantly exceeds national averages across numerous indicators and ensuring these students continue to have the opportunity to come to Middlesex and succeed once here and after they leave is a cornerstone of our mission of transforming potential into success.

- 52% of Middlesex students are eligible for free schools meals, the highest of any UK university (average for the universities with data available - 112 institutions - is 22%).
- 63% of Middlesex undergraduate students are classified as BAME.
- 87% of Middlesex undergraduate UK and EU students fall within at least one widening participation category.
- 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.
- Typically around 37% of our intake only have BTEC qualifications, compared to just under 30% who only have A-levels.
- Approximately one quarter of our students, who are often mature, also have neither A-levels or BTEC qualifications.

Therefore, this has, and continues to shape our activity in relation to good 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 2014/15 to 2018/19) there has been an increase of 6.6 percentage points in the number of students gaining a good honours degree classification (either a first class or an upper second class), from 62.2% of graduates in 2014/15 to 68.8% in 2018/19. The number of good honours degrees awarded remains below the sector average by 7.9 percentage points and during this period this gap has remained

relatively static.



Analysis of different student cohorts demonstrates that there are a number of characteristics which impact on the outcome of good 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. Regression analysis suggests that around one fifth of the improvement can be attributed to a change in student demographics and the rest to activity which has been targeted at supporting students.

Due to 87% of our students falling into one or more widening participation groups as well as given 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 attainment gaps between student groups, and we have put in place dedicated resource to improve the analysis of our student data in this area. For example creation of an inclusive learning environment, and changes to curriculum and assessment that address the learning needs of students with vocationally orientated qualifications who make up a significant proportion of our students. More details can be found in section 4 - Enhancement activity.

Degree outcomes for graduates from Middlesex's overseas campuses are broadly in line with those at our North London campus. The smaller numbers of graduates and changes in curriculum as these campuses develop mean the classification profiles do not show any particular trends with increases and decreases varying year to year. This is an area which will be kept under review as provision develops.

Students at both franchised and validated partners are slightly less likely to get a good degree, 64% and 63% respectively for those graduating in 2018/19. 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. 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 annual monitoring and enhancement (AME) 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 AME 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. AME also provides a vehicle for identifying good practice for University wide dissemination. Middlesex undertakes a parallel process of annual monitoring and review (AMR) 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 an assessment review which will support us in developing a new assessment strategy dealing

with advancements in assessment practice as well as the increased diversity in curriculum, from such programmes as degree apprenticeships.

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. It may be considered again as part of the review of assessment in summer 2020.

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 The Middlesex University Strategy 2017-2022 which sets out our mission of 'transforming 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;
- Pre-arrival programmes developed in collaboration with FE partners and partner schools to facilitate transition into HE;

- Personalised academic support and tracking of engagement through personal tutors 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 good 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 good degrees and this effect can be tracked over time.

6 Ongoing approach

Middlesex's organisational focus is on reducing disparities across student outcomes which sits at the heart of our current Strategy, 'Transforming potential into success 2017-22'. Our Disparity Index KPI, a basket indicator which looks at gaps across continuation and progression to employment across a range of student characteristics, is one of our eight organisational 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. Findings from this review will contribute to our activity in this area, as will the outcomes of our Assessment Review.

The impact of the No Detriment approach by the University on its classification profile along with other academic safety net measures in response to the COVID-19 crisis will be evaluated when data for graduating cohorts becomes available and the Degree Outcomes Statement updated accordingly.

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