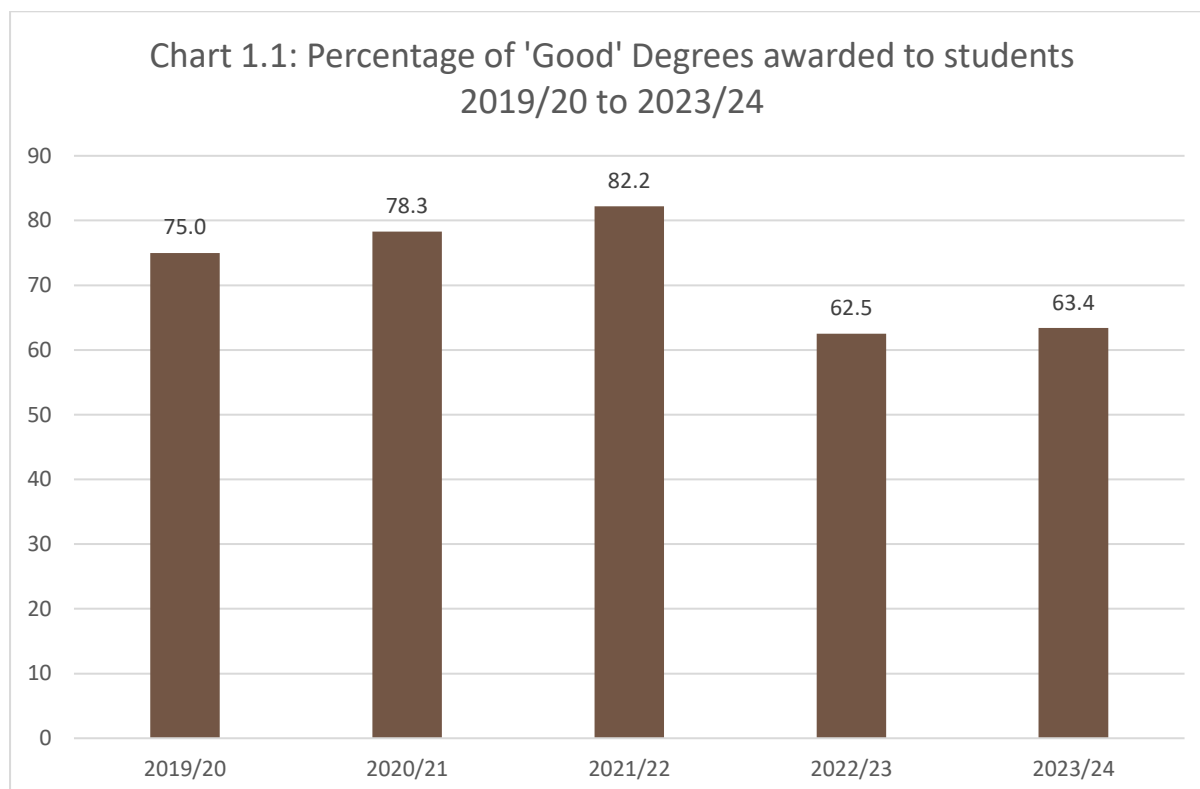


## Norland Degree Outcomes Statement 2024

### 1. Institutional Degree Classification Profile

A five-year comparison of degree outcome data is provided.

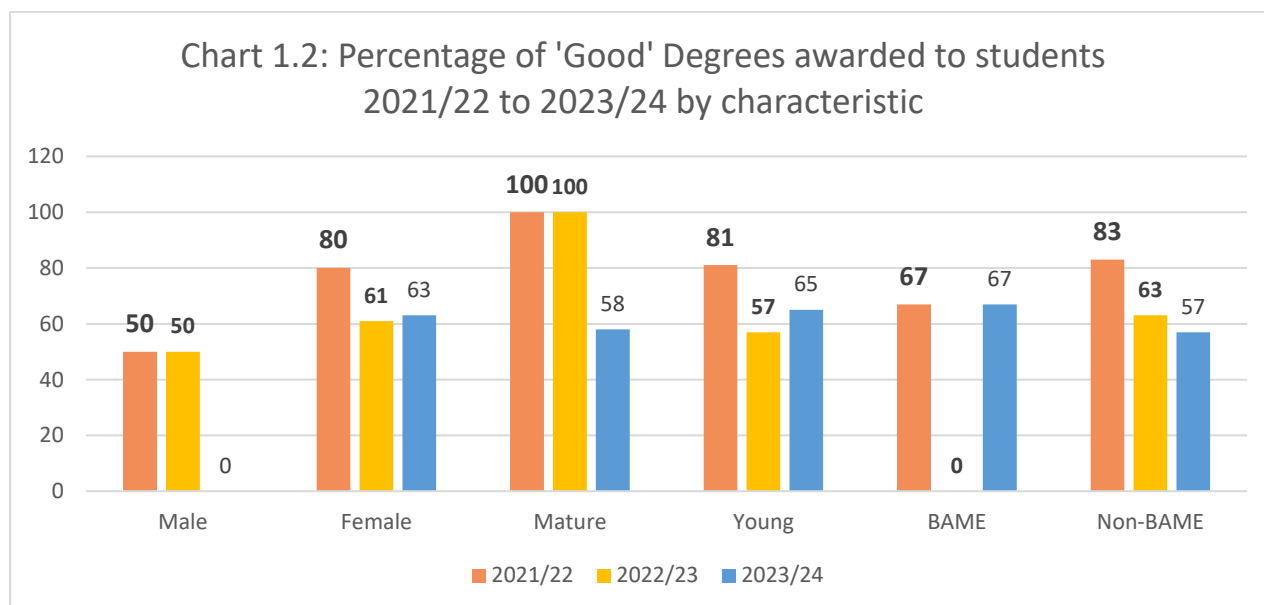


The data demonstrates that from 2019/20 to 2021/22, there was a steady increase in the proportion of students being awarded good degrees<sup>1</sup> at Norland, which was in line with changes in attainment as reported by [OfS](#). A significant drop in the proportion of students achieving good degrees at Norland was reported in 2022/23, and this figure has remained broadly similar in 2023/24. Several factors which were instigated by our regulator, the Office for Students, contributed to this drop, including a greater focus in assessment and grading on spelling, punctuation and grammar, and clear mapping of outcomes to Sector Recognised Standards. In addition, a whole team approach to marking was introduced. This, as noted by our External Examiner, ensured that opportunities were provided for all lecturers to learn from each other and develop a genuinely shared understanding of expectations. It should also be noted that this graduating cohort of students' schooling was affected by the pandemic, but no 'No Detriment' policies were applied; this will have had an impact on their outcomes, but we believe the classifications are a true reflection of their abilities. The graduating cohorts in both 2019/20 and 2020/21 were subject to No Detriment policies, thus the arrangements for these cohorts varied from the standard approach as described in section 4.

The proportion of students attaining good degrees at Norland now falls below [sector average](#) of 78% (2022/23), at a time when our regulator, the Office for Students, is concerned about grade inflation

<sup>1</sup> A good degree is defined as one classified at 2:1 or above.

within the Higher Education sector. This demonstrates that Norland has successfully embedded the OfS's new requirements into its processes. Norland is confident that its robust monitoring processes are effective in protecting the standards of its awards, whilst ensuring fairness for students. It should also be noted that the entry requirements for students to be admitted to Norland is 96 UCAS points, whereas the average for other universities is 120 UCAS points.



*Figure 1 NB. There were no male students in the graduating class of 2023/24*

Analysis of the percentage of good degrees awarded to students by characteristic over the last three years suggests some disparity, however both male and BAME students account for less than 5% of graduates in each year reported and therefore this data is below levels of significance and should not be used to draw conclusions. In particular, whilst data for BAME students suggests particularly poor outcomes, it is important to note that the number of BAME students enrolled in each year group represented above were just 3, 1 and 6, respectively, and therefore accounts for too small of a percentage to be statistically significant. Nevertheless, Norland continues to carefully monitor the achievement of all students to ensure parity of opportunity through targeted support when necessary. A significant drop in the proportion of mature students achieving 'good' degrees was seen in 2023/24, however the proportion of mature students within this group was much higher than in previous years which goes some way to explaining this.

## 2. Assessment and Marking Practices

Norland ensures that assessment meets sector standards by:

- Using grading rubrics and assessment criteria which are informed by OfS Sector Recognised standards and SEEC credit level descriptors;
- Using grading rubrics that are tailored to assessment types and levels;
- Setting assessments informed by QAA Early Childhood Studies Benchmark Statements and the Norland Code of Professional Responsibilities;
- Ensuring that all assessment is moderated in line with Norland policy which accords with best practice;

- Ensuring that assessment criteria have been fairly, accurately and consistently applied during first marking, with increased moderation for inexperienced markers;
- Ensuring that there is appropriate consideration for exceptional assessment circumstances and that there is a clear procedure for consideration of student appeals; and
- Ensuring that assessment is scrutinised by External Examiners at module level. External Examiners are appointed by the Academic Board in accordance with the External Examiner policy, to ensure they are suitably qualified and have relevant subject experience. Norland's External Examiners consistently agree that the marking and classification criteria are set at the appropriate level, that marking / grading criteria are properly and consistently applied, and that marking and grading is fair and reliable.

### **3. Academic Governance**

Norland's governance and committee structures provide assurance that the value of qualifications awarded by Norland is protected over time, and that marking practices are adhered to. Boards of Examiners<sup>2</sup> reporting into the Academic Board, manage the scrutiny of results, utilising External Examiner critical review. Academic Board is the guardian of the academic quality and standards of Norland's awards and, through its subcommittees, oversees the programme review and approval processes and the wider review of academic regulations, policies and procedures. Academic Board reports to the Board of Directors, which receives reports on the maintenance of academic quality and standards, including data on student achievement. A member of the Board of Directors also attends each Academic Board. Norland has made use of external expertise in assuring the degree outcomes statement through the external representatives on the deliberative committees at which the statement has been reviewed and through the specific review by the External Examiner.

### **4. Classification Algorithms**

In calculating the classification band in which a student falls, the Awards/Progression Board of Examiners uses two methods. The method giving the higher result is used to determine the classification.

#### **Method 1**

This is based on the average of the best grades at level 6 amounting to 120 credits, rounded to the nearest whole number. If the rounded average is within 1% of a classification threshold (50, 60 or 70%), the student will be upgraded to the higher class if both of the following criteria are met:

- a. there are marks for at least 60 credits (e.g., 4 single modules) at level 6 in the higher class;
- b. there are marks for no more than 30 credits (e.g., 2 single modules) at level 6 in the mark range of the class below that of the rounded average.

In the case of a student with ungraded credit at the level of the award, method 1 may be used provided there are grades for modules worth 90 credits.

#### **Method 2**

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<sup>2</sup> Assessment Board of Examiners and the Awards/Progression Board of Examiners

This is based on the average (not rounded) of the best grades at level 5 amounting to 90 credits, weighted at 50%, plus the average (not rounded) of the best grades at level 6 amounting to 90 credits, weighted at 50%, rounded to the nearest whole number. If the rounded average is within 1% of a classification threshold (50, 60 or 70%), the student will be upgraded to the higher class if both of the following criteria are met:

- a. there are marks for at least 120 credits across both levels in the higher class;
- b. there are marks for no more than 60 credits across both levels in the mark range of the class below that of the rounded average.

In the case of a student with ungraded credit at the level one below that of the award, method 2 may be used provided there are grades for modules worth 90 credits.

Norland undertook a significant review of its classification processes in 2021 and, as a result, these classification methods have been aligned to the UKSCQA's [Principles for Effective Degree Algorithm Design](#). Whilst method 1 is based on exit velocity, method 2 allows for equal weighting across both levels 5 and 6. As students at Norland are unable to choose optional modules and therefore select the assessment types or subjects which they may find more favourable, we believe it is important to offer both algorithms. Furthermore, method 2 allows for discounting of 30 credits at both levels 5 and 6. Whilst UKSCQA discourage discounting, at Norland we are confident students will still meet all programme learning outcomes despite the discounting. Extensive mapping has taken place to ensure this is the case.

## 5. Teaching Practices and Learning Resources

Norland's degree and diploma are practical courses and teaching and learning therefore takes place in person. Norland takes pride in how the theory which underpins practice is integrated. Students access module teaching for the degree in 2.5 hour blocks which allows time for theoretical perspective to be explored and then applied to real world experiences. This also provides students with time to reflect and challenge in real time. This deep learning is evidenced within the National Student Survey (NSS) scores where students have given rating of 95% for their learning opportunities and 96% for the quality of teaching on their course, both above the sector averages of 82% and 85% respectively.

Students give good feedback about the resources available to them. They have access to a mock nursery environment which is used as a teaching space. Students' satisfaction with their learning resources is reflected in the NSS, with 87% satisfaction achieved.

Library resources, including the physical and ever-growing online stock was given a 95% satisfaction rating against a national average of 90%.

Due to the single focus and small size of Norland, students can access help and support from a variety of places. There is a strong personal tutorial system whereby academic staff get to know their tutees very well and this facilitates an environment where there is no stigma to accessing support. This high level of engagement with students is demonstrated within the exit velocity of their achievements. Students enter Norland with a variety of qualifications which make up their 96 UCAS points, and they make steady progress in their grades throughout their studies. This is ultimately reflected within degree classifications.

Norland uses its data to identify characteristics of students which may put them at risk of non-completion. Applicants with these characteristics are offered an enhanced support package, including regular meetings with student support staff, more frequent access to personal tutors and transition plans to support them into Norland and throughout their studies. Further work is ongoing to improve outcomes for particularly vulnerable students, for example in 2023/24 a Care Leavers Covenant was introduced to support entrants who have spent time in care.

## 6. Identifying Good Practice and Actions

### Good practice

- The moderation and marking processes are regularly commended by the External Examiner, who is confident that Norland is making assessment decisions in line with other Universities.
- The wide range of assessments which are fit for purpose are identified as a key strength by the External Examiner. Additionally, the culture of high expectations which manifests in students' demonstration of high levels of engagement with assessment is commended.
- The significant number of opportunities for applied learning via placement, the Norland Diploma and degree modules focused on professionalism and practical activity have been recognised by the External Examiner as contributing to excellent graduate outcomes.
- The NSS 2022 and 2023 data includes notable improvements in students' perceptions of assessment and feedback processes and academic support.
- Student feedback continues to highlight the value placed upon opportunities to put theory into practice and to engage with a wide range of external speakers through the Value-Added curriculum.
- Externality is strong within Norland and this is important because we are a small institution. Within the Academic team a high proportion of lecturers are experienced external examiners for other institutions. This externality supports academic dialogue and discussion in order to ensure Norland remains current. For example, changes have been made to handbooks to make them more accessible, and we have produced videos which take students on a journey through each module handbook with a full explanation offered throughout. These changes support students' understanding of their learning outcomes and, ultimately, should enable them to achieve better. Other examples of externality which contribute to Norland's robust approach to degree outcomes include:
  - Academic staff sitting as externals on the deliberative committees of other institutions
  - Academic staff engaging in consultancy and training within the sector
  - Conference presentations for designated bodies and regulators
  - Academic staff sitting on the Board of our representative body, IHE
  - Academic staff working for QAA as a reviewer
- Data is used to inform decision making about the programme. We track student attendance to analyse the impact on their studies and grades, offering supportive intervention when attendance levels drop. Student achievement data is also analysed and evaluated to inform module teaching and assessment reviews. Within this, we pay particular attention to students from underrepresented groups, to ensure that are accessing the right kinds of help and support, which will allow them to fully reach their potential.

### Actions

- Evaluate the targeted support for assessment provided since 2022
  - Module drop-in sessions at the end of the day
  - Generic Q&A session for assessment in the evening once a trimester
  - New timetable which allows time for 1:1 contact with tutors and lecturers
  - Assessment tutorials offered via Outlook
  - Study skills programme
- Continue to identify trends as to why students refer and fail assessments, at all levels
- Evaluate the online summer school offered before arrival by tracking progress of those who attend
- Evaluate the study skills programme offered as part of the spiral curriculum
- Monitor the achievement of students who are in underrepresented groups. In particular, further analyse continuation data for male and mature students to ensure support is mapped strategically.
- Evaluate the Senior Personal Tutor role.