



Universities UK

Transparency, consistency and fairness in academic standards

ARC

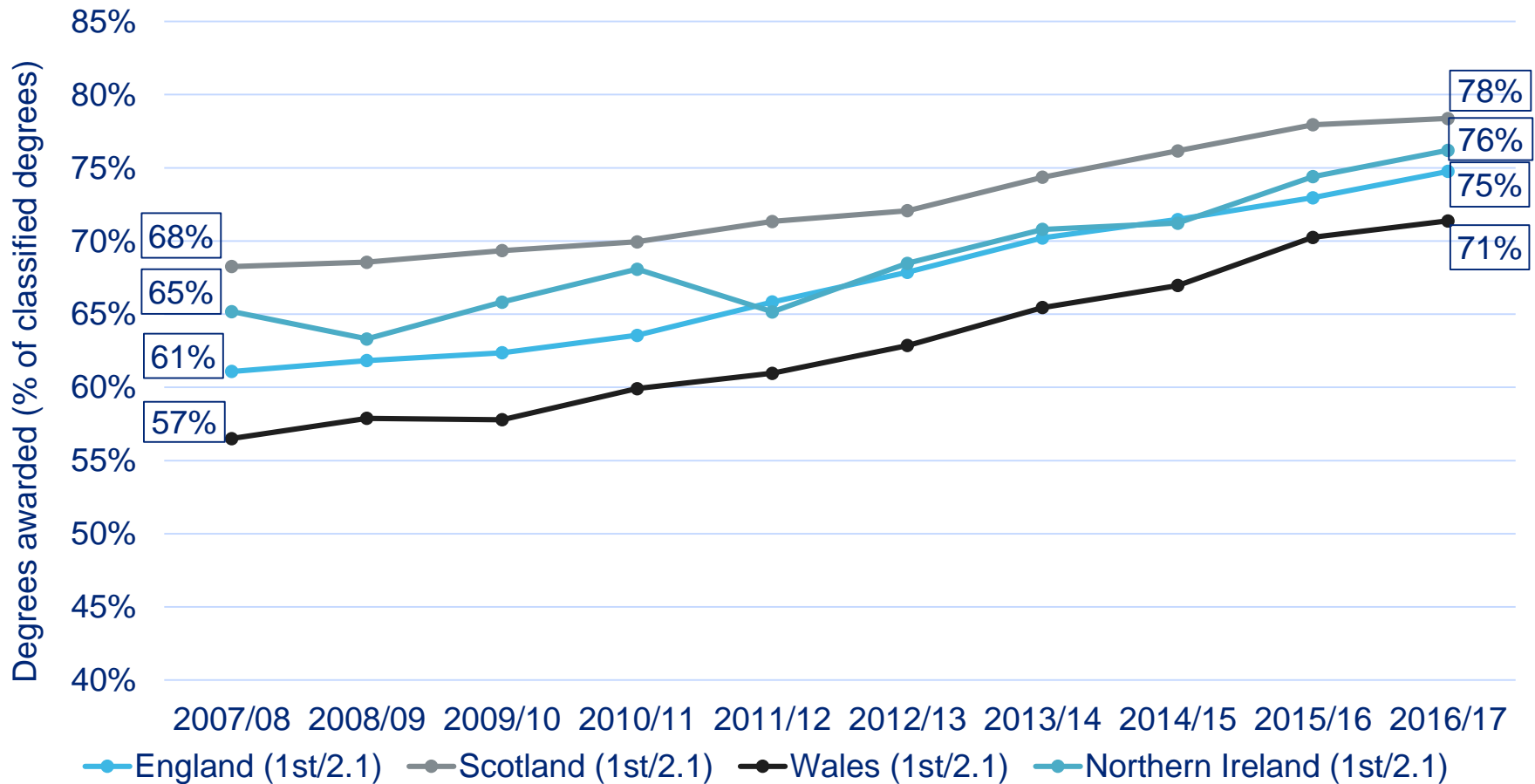
6 September 2018

- » UUK, Guild HE, QAA and UKSCQA
- » Produce description of degree classification system and criteria.
 - » Linked to national qualification frameworks
 - » Focuses on student study skills and engagement
 - » High level element plus more detailed piece
- » Analyse trends and drivers of the rising proportion of upper degrees
- » Make recommendations to the sector

- » Work responds to
 - » The observable trend and potential risks
 - » Regulatory changes and political interest in England
 - » New entrants in England (?)

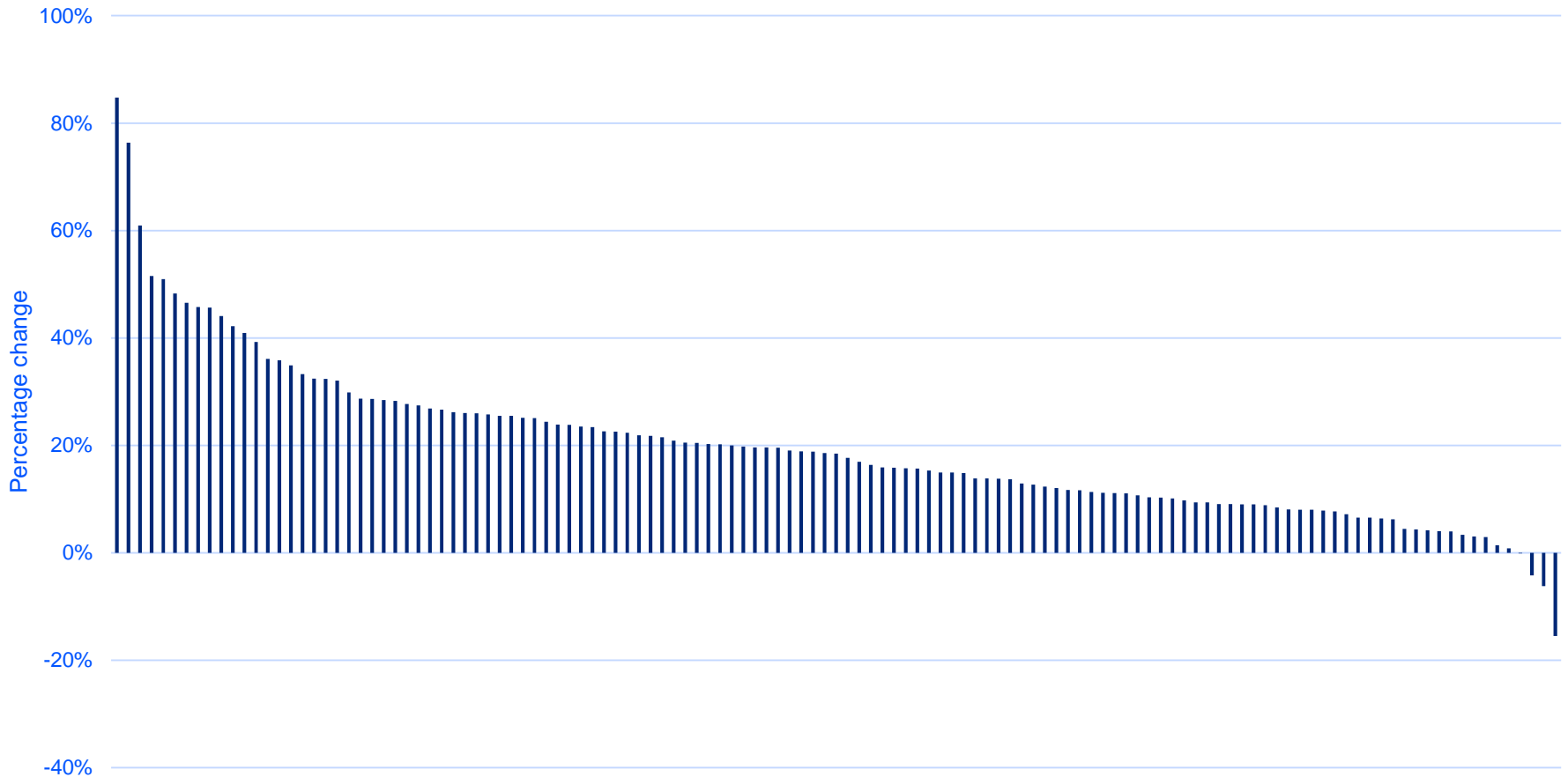
- » Publications – November for consultation

Upper degree awards (1st & 2.1) awarded at UK higher education institutions, 2007/08 to 2016/17, as a proportion of classified degrees awarded, by UK nation



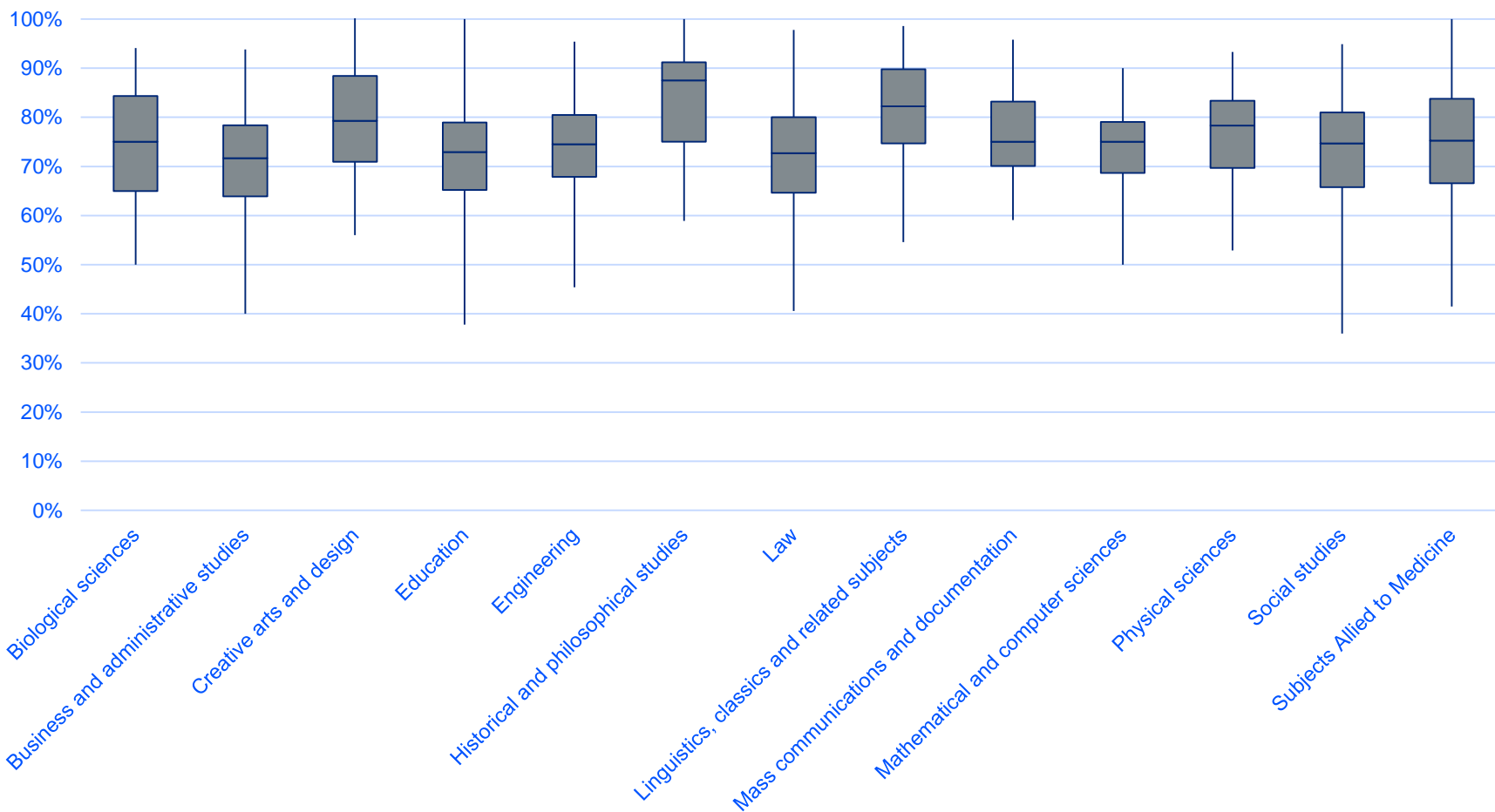
Source: HESA Student record, 2007/08 to 2016/17, accessed through HeidiPlus

Percentage change in upper degrees, 2010/11 to 2016/17, awarded by UK higher education institutions



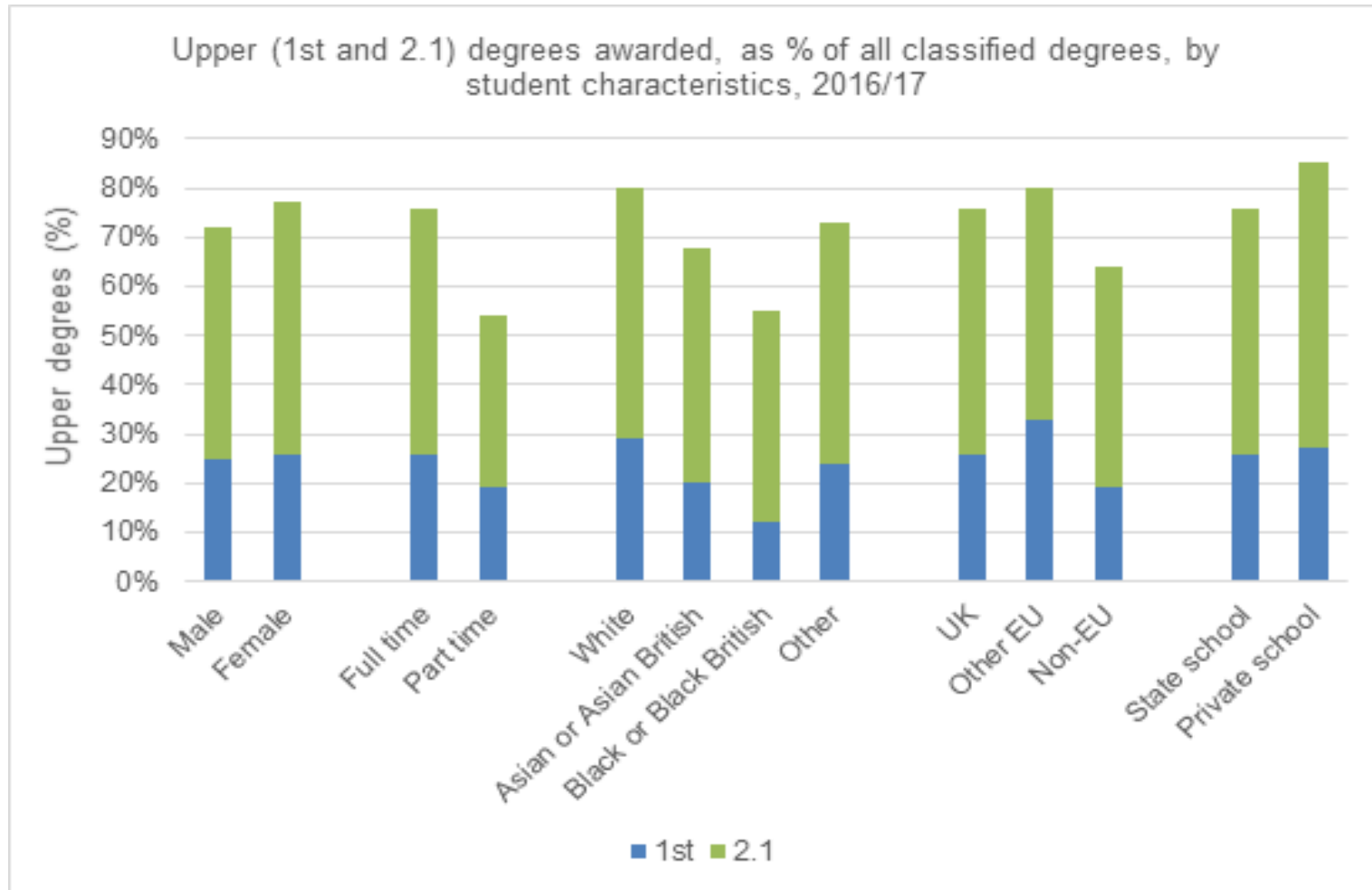
Source: HESA Student record, 2010/11 to 2016/17 [Sample = 125 institutions, awarded at least 500 classified degrees in 2016/17 and providing HE in 2010/11 and 2016/17]

Distribution of good degrees awarded by institution, 2016/17 (at least 50 classified degrees awarded)



Source: HESA (2018) Table 17 - HE qualifiers by subject of study and level of qualification obtained

Attainment gap



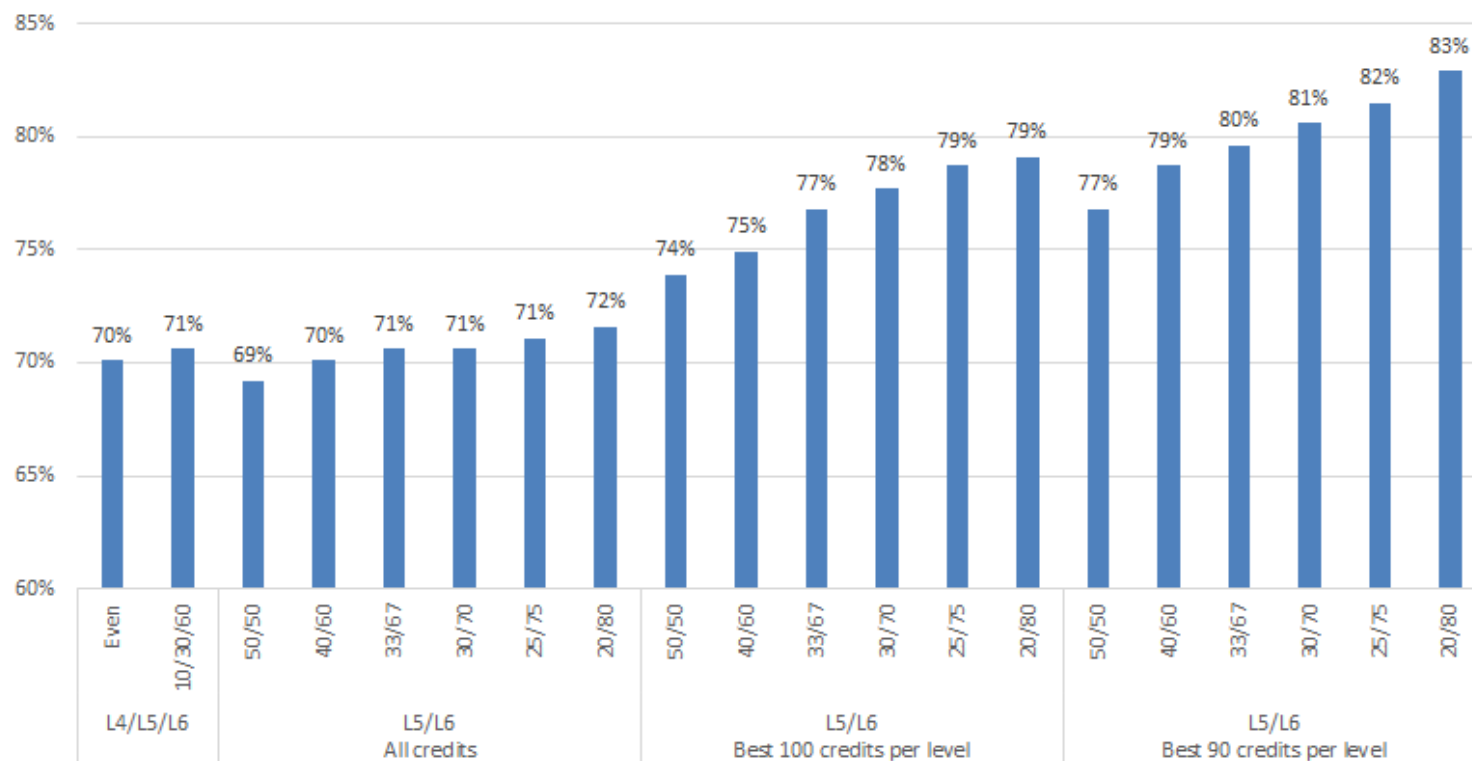
- » The model is used to calculate the proportion (of all degrees awarded) of the percentage point increase in upper degrees since 2008 that can be explained by a combination of:
 - » Average UCAS score of graduating cohort
 - » Real expenditure on academic services (CPI, 2015=100)
 - » Real expenditure on student and staff facilities (CPI, 2015=100)
 - » Staff-student ratio
 - » Institution type (control)

Explaining “the unexplained”

- » Assessment and marking practices
- » Curriculum development
- » Degree classification algorithms
- » Enhancement activity
- » Staff development
- » Student motivation

Degree algorithm impact?

Upper degree awards by degree algorithm (n=211)



Areas to consider

Enhancing the transparency and externality of institutional evidence, for example:

- Institutional classification statement for transparency of evidence
- 'Chief external examiner' role to provide external advice to governance bodies on future risks

Clarifying the appropriate range of practice in degree classification algorithms

- Approaches to borderline and 'discounting'

Calibrating assessment in a criterion based system

- Advance HE external examiner training
- Role of external examiners in assessment design
- Professional development of staff assessment and marking
- Use of statistical data and benchmarking in quality assurance

Reviewing public accountability and incentives

- Regulatory assurances
- League tables
- Positioning in the TEF

Reviewing the longer-term structure of degree classification system (burgess mk2...)

- Upper classification
- The HEAR
- Transcript and cohort ranking

	High level description (referenced to national qualification frameworks)
First-class honours (1 st)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achieved all course learning outcomes to an excellent standard • demonstrated excellent knowledge and understanding, practical and cognitive skills • demonstrated excellent initiative in using time effectively and managing their own learning • reflected critically and independently on practical work • engaged with supervision at an independent level and set future goals
Upper second-class honours (2.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achieved all the course learning outcomes to a high standard • demonstrated thorough and nuanced knowledge and understanding, practical and cognitive skills • demonstrated strong initiative in using time effectively and managing their own learning • reflected critically on practical work • engaged systematically with supervision and set future goals
Lower second-class honours (2.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achieved all the course learning outcomes to a good standard • demonstrated strong knowledge and understanding, practical and cognitive skills • demonstrated clear initiative in using time effectively and managing their own learning • reflected critically on practical work • engaged with supervision and set future goals
Third-class honours (3 rd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achieved all the course learning outcomes • demonstrated adequate knowledge and understanding, cognitive and practical skills • used time effectively in managing their own learning • reflected on practical work • engaged with supervision and set future goals with support
Fail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not achieve the course learning outcomes • failed to demonstrate adequate knowledge and understanding, cognitive and/or practical skills • struggled to manage their own learning • was unable to reflect on practical work • did not engage with supervision