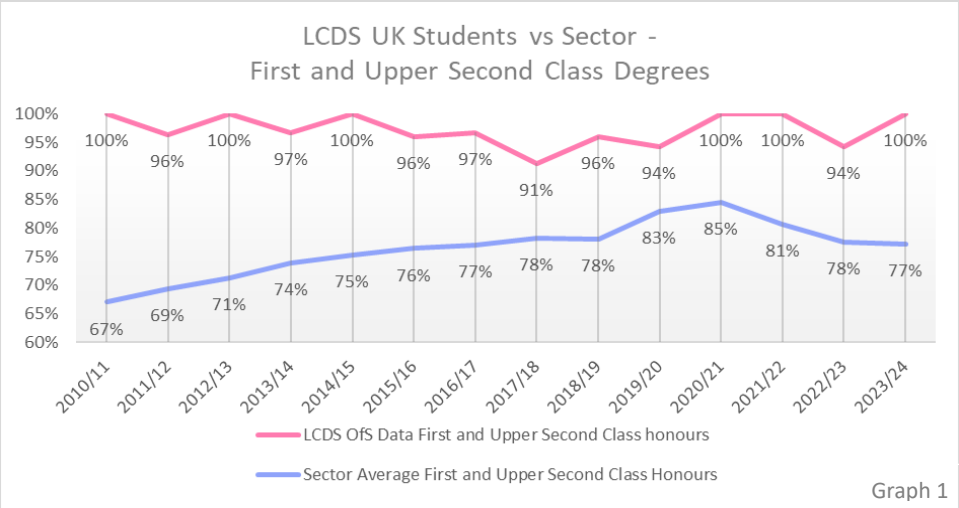
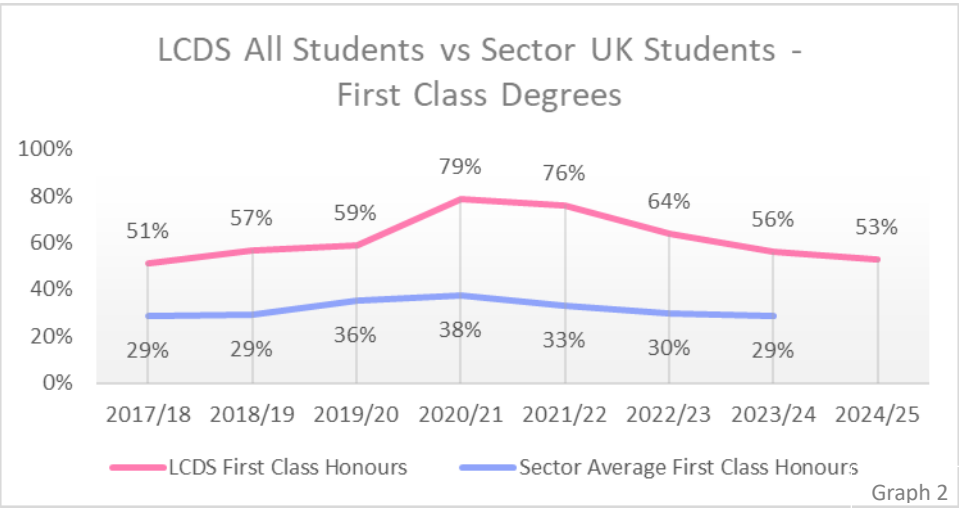
Degree Outcomes Statement – London Contemporary Dance School 2024/25

London Contemporary Dance School (LCDS), The Place is a small and specialist institution currently offering one degree programme at FHEQ level 6: BA (Hons) Contemporary Dance.

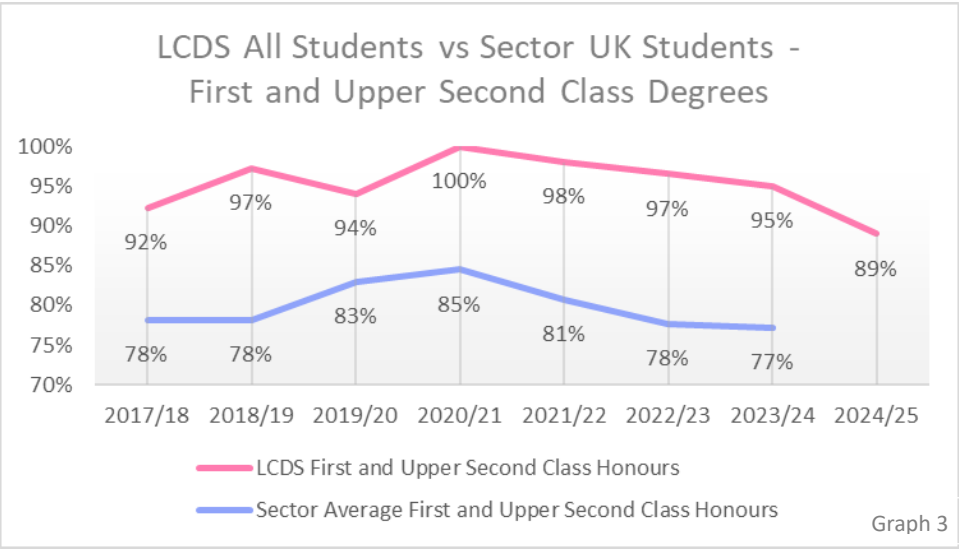
Up until September 2021, the course was validated by the University of Kent, and the final cohort to graduate with a degree from University of Kent was in July 2023. During the 2020/21 academic year the course was revalidated, and from September 2021 the course is validated by the University of the Arts London (UAL). July 2025 saw the second cohort graduate with a degree validated by UAL.



Graph 1



Graph 2



Graph 3

Degree Classification Profile

The graphs above summarise the trends in degree outcomes considered in this report. Graph one shows the data published by the Office for Students in December 2025, which outlines the degree outcomes for UK based students, however graph two and graph three summarises the degree outcomes for all students, and not just students from the UK. For this report we will concentrate on all students.

Overall, the proportion of "good degrees" (those awarded a First Class or Upper Second class degree classification) has steadily decreased over the last five years, after peaking during the COVID-19 pandemic at 100% in 2020/21, it was at 89% in 2024/25.

Alongside this, the proportion of students receiving a First Class honours, steadily rose to 79% in 2020/21, although this has also steadily decreases over the last five years, and in 2024/25 was 53%. Several no-detriment measures were introduced by the University of Kent in 2019/20 and 2020/21 which were intended to offset the disruption to student learning experience caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and may be one indicating factor of the increase in 2019/20 and 2020/21. Work will continue over the next few years to understand if the change in validator produces a further decrease on First class honours being awarded. We remain mindful of other contributing factors that may also influence the rise and fall of this data, particularly our small data sets which are more susceptible to fluctuation and

When focusing on ethnicity, due to small student numbers there is a high volatility in the data which can disproportionately affect percentages and should be taken into account when reviewing the data. 2024/25 saw a slight awarding gap of 6% for the number of good degrees being awarded for students from Global Majority communities at 85% compared to white students at 91%; however, this increases to an awarding gap of 12% when looking solely at First class degrees being awarded. However, over the last ten years there has been no consistent long term attainment gap and 2024/25 saw a slight decrease in the awarding gap identified in 2023/24. This could be reflective that the LCDS Access and Participation Plan being more established and enriching the recruitment of students from new sources.

For students with a declared disability, an attainment gap was identified. On the number of good degrees awarded, at attainment gap of 15% was seen, and increased to 31% for those being awarded a First class degree. Once again we need to factor in that fluctuations can easily be caused due to small data sets, however we are closely monitoring this and have started further investigations to identify any further support mechanisms which can be implemented to help support disabled students. It is also important to note that disabled students tend to have strong progression into employment and further study.[1]

The awarding gap for male students gaining a First-Class degree also fluctuates each year, with the gap for those gaining good degree decreasing to 4% in 2025, however male students outperformed female students when looking solely at First degrees awarded.

Whilst the number of good degrees has slightly declined, it continues to be above the national average. We are also aware of the high number of unexplained degrees being awarded.[2]

One factor for both is due to the nature of the course being due to high contact hours and students desire to be attend award winning student support at a world leading institution. Other

[1] Student outcomes data dashboard - Office for Students

[2] Analysis of degree classifications over time: Changes in graduate attainment from 2010-11 to 2023-24 - Office for Students

factors such as being largely based on their artistic potential through an admissions workshop, as opposed to focussing solely on entry qualifications make the provision attractive to practical talent. Due to the decline in students being able to study Dance at GCSE or A-Level (One Dance UK reported a 50% decline in an uptake of students studying GCSE and A-Level Dance between 2010 and 2020[3]), concentrating on students who have gained high entry qualifications in a subject specific A-Level becomes less relevant when offering a place of study, with their work at an admissions workshop becoming more pertinent.

Another factor is due to being in receipt of ISTA, and World Leading Specialist Provider funding 2022-27. This funding was launched by the OfS to provide support for small-scale world leading higher education institutions. These institutions offer specialist training and educational courses, with graduates going on to have significant, demonstrative impact on societies and economies across the globe.

The recent funding award reflects The Place's legacy of being at the forefront of dance for over 50 years, developing artists and alumni that have global reach and significant impact on local and international communities. It also recognises the value of The Place's unique model of locating world class higher education provision within an organisation also engaged with performance, production, education and community engagement.

The 2022-27 funding is instrumental in ensuring The Place can maintain and develop its world class provision of higher education in dance, including intensive training at undergraduate level supported by high contact hours. It enables The Place to invest in the London Contemporary Dance School student experience, create new courses, develop global partnerships within and outside of the dance sector to share knowledge, support artists and evolve the artform through research, and to continue to advocate for creative education in the UK.

Overall, this means students are highly motivated to study and their achievements are often very good and higher than the national average. We also pride ourselves on the impact of the articulation of educational gains that were judged as outstanding in TEF 2023, which support and evaluates LCDS educational gains as being judged as very high quality.

Whilst the number of good degrees for UK based students in the OfS published data, it is important to note that there has been no significant change since 2010-11, and the attainment of students has remained constant. However, LCDS will continue to monitor and keep an open dialogue around the high level of good degrees awarded, focusing on any potential effects of the newly validated course and change in assessment practices and classification algorithms.

Assessment and Marking Practices

LCDS is subject to, and adheres to, the assessment practices of the validating university including marking scale, degree algorithms and internal and external moderation processes. These practices align with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, with thorough processes in place to ensure that assessment and marking practices operate in accordance with the expectations, core practices and other reference points (e.g. Subject Benchmark Statements and Degree Classification Descriptors). LCDS also has its own Quality Handbook which outlines the internal processes for following and ensuring adherence with the validating universities assessment practices. Under out current validator, UAL, assessment practices are

[3] dance-in-education-report.pdf (onedanceuk.org)

designed to complement creative practice, and work is often assessed through portfolios of work.

All marking is undertaken either by a group of assessors, or by a first marker, and then moderated by another examiner. Assessment and marking practices are reviewed by the Board of Examiners which operate with a member of academic staff at the validating university as Chair, and an external examiner.

The external examiner produces an annual report providing informed and impartial assurance of the academic standards achieved, both in comparison to the FHEQ and those at other universities in the UK, and comment on the reliability of assessment and marking practices and on the standards achieved by students. These reports are reviewed internally at LCDS by the Academic Board and a response written with actions highlighted.

Academic Governance

LCDS Academic Board maintains oversight of student attainment and degree outcomes through a detailed report received annually. The report also benchmarks against national averages and trends, and against other comparable courses. Degree outcomes are also considered in the Annual Monitoring Reports which are reviewed by Academic Board before being sent to the validating university. On top of this the External Examiner Reports and Responses are considered and received by the Academic Board.

A report is also compiled annually for the Board of Governors on academic practice and standards within LCDS. Student observers also sit on the Board of Governors in order to provide additional assurance to the governing body.

Classification Algorithms

For the degrees awarded up until July 2023 by the University of Kent, two methods of classification were used, in alignment with their classification system. These were the ‘average’ method and the ‘preponderance’ method, with students awarded the better result achieved under either methodology. Classification under the ‘average’ method was based on the calculation of a final weighted course average mark, whilst the ‘preponderance’ method of classification required the achievement of a final weighted course average mark that f within 3% of the boundary for a higher class band and for at least 50% of the contributing credits to be achieved in that higher band.

In 2023/24, the first cohort of the newly validated course through UAL graduated, and the degrees calculated using UAL classification algorithm. UAL also use a dual algorithm under which two results are calculated and the one that provides a better result is used, these are: the final year, level 6, calculation only and a combination of unit results at levels 5 and 6. So far, the change in course and classification algorithm has so far shown a drop in the number of students receiving a First class degree, alongside a decline in the number of students being awarded a “good degree”. In 2025 the classification algorithm balance was 38% awarded using Level 6 units only and 62% using Level 5 and 6 units. As only two cohorts have graduated under UAL it is too early to understand the full impact the change in assessment practices and regulations has had on degree outcomes, however, work will continue over the next few years to understand the full impact of the change in validator.

Teaching Practices and Learning Resources

The BA course is highly intensive and has a high number of contact hours and small group teaching. Feedback is delivered regularly in classes, along with one-one tutorials and through written assessment reports. Recent staff training sessions have been held to address external examiner comments on inconsistency in lengths of feedback students received, with progress in this area being recognised by the external examiner and by the overall context of TEF 2023, Gold for Student Experience.

Over the last two years several staff have been working to gain fellowships with the Higher Education Academy (Advance HE), with a target for 50% of core faculty to gain fellowship by 2026.

Due to NSS scores around Learning Resources, a Learning Resources Strategy was introduced in 2022/23 to establish a closer relationship between different learning resources as well as gaining a greater understanding of students perceptions of the resources on offer. Following on from the COVID-19 pandemic, there is ongoing work to develop the range of online resources available to the students, allowing students greater access to online library resources in particular. In the summer of 2023, there was also a review of the Virtual Learning Environment, and a new template classroom for all Units was introduced to help aid students access to key assessment information and resources. The NSS satisfaction scores for Learning Resources showed a rise from 61% in 2021 to 96% in 2025, indicating a positive outcome to date on the interventions which have been made.

Identifying Good Practice and Actions

External examiners regularly comment on the high quality of student work and note that all degrees awarded are appropriate for the level and achievement of the students.

Alongside this, the external examiners often praise the high standard of teaching and professionalism of staff and students. Also, student satisfaction around the teaching on the course, academic support and learning opportunities have also been largely above sector average on the NSS for the last 5 years. Having opportunities to work with a range of professional artists alongside teaching staff who are active in the field allow students reach the high standards noted by the external examiner and achieve excellent outcomes.

Risks and Challenges

As a small and specialist institution, identifying clear trends with small data sets can be tricky. The capacity and resources available to monitor, review and instigate developments can be limited and slower to progress, as well as it being more appropriate for us to look at multi-year trend analysis which produces more statistically certain results compared to single year analysis.

Small numbers will always lead to a volatility in some data outcomes and whilst a risk for some data sets, LCDS take pride in the quality of world leading provision, facility and student experience as proven.

One key challenge is the attainment gap between students with declared disability compared to those with no disability. Work has been undertaken to raise greater awareness of the Disabled Students Allowance, and the extra support this can bring, including mentoring, and staff are encouraging more eligible students to apply for it. The 2024 data show a positive impact of this intervention; however, we will continue to monitor the uptake of DSA and other support systems within the school, against the impact this has on student attainment.

Another key challenge arising from the recent data is the awarding gap for Global Majority students. Whilst this data has fluctuated over the last ten years, it is an area we will need to continue to monitor and analyse further any potential reasons for this to help support current students to ensure this gap can close again in the coming years.

Another is the higher-than-average number of Firsts awarded, and good degrees awarded. However, this has fallen over the last few years, and will continue to be monitored as more cohorts graduate with UAL as the validating university to see the full extent to which the change in assessment practices is impacting the degree outcomes.

However, we are committed to taking a strategic approach to enabling student achievement and protecting the value and credibility of the degrees awarded.