

Course Data Fact Sheet: Student Retention and Achievement Data

What is this data?

Following the completion of each academic year, summary reports are produced showing rates for student retention and achievement. For each course a single report provides three tables, one exploring full-time student performance, another exploring part-time student performance, and the final one reporting award profiles.

The two performance tables report the last three years' data with rows for each level of study. Columns are included for each of the following:

- **Retention:** the % Retained column reports the proportion of students who, having made a start to the course, had not been formally withdrawn from the course at the end of teaching.
- **Achievement:** the % Progressed or Achieved column reports the proportion of those students not withdrawn by the end of teaching whose academic performance did not prevent them either progressing to the next level of study or being awarded their intended qualification.
- **Projected non-continuation:** A key performance indicator for the University is non-continuation which is only measured at level four. This nationally significant metric seeks to measure the proportion of entrants to higher education who are no longer in higher education (either at University of Suffolk or elsewhere) twelve months later. As an institution we are not able to determine whether students who withdraw from our courses subsequently enrol for a higher education course elsewhere so we can only provide a pessimistic projection of this figure.
- **Attrition:** A University of Suffolk measure of the proportion of students who enrol but are not on the course at the end of the academic year.

The Award Profile report shows the number of students who gained awards and gives a breakdown of the classifications that the students achieved. As above, figures are provided for the recently completed year and the previous year.

Interpreting the data

When examining the reports for a given course, it may be helpful to consider the following :

- **Retention.** Ideally, we would hope all students who start one of our courses will successfully complete it. In practice, a 100% retention rate is unusual for courses with large student numbers. However, particularly low retention rates (less than 80% say) may be indicative of a poor student experience, the recruitment of students ill prepared for higher education, or weak student support provision.
- **Achievement.** Achievement rates are difficult to interpret. If they are low it could indicate that students are failing to engage with assessment processes adequately, that the learning and teaching methods are not effective in enabling students to learn, or that the assessment strategy is failing to enable students to demonstrate their learning.
- **Awards.** On courses with larger numbers of students, the awards profile should evidence all available classifications being awarded - it may be of concern if the top classification is never awarded or if most students receive the same classification. The proportion of students gaining a higher Honours Degree classification (2:1 or first) is monitored nationally and is a subject explored when 'Grade Inflation' is discussed. In 2016-17 around 26% of all Honours Degree students nationally gained a first, and 49% a 2:1 (see <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/outcomes>).

