3.   The University's Response

3.1   <u>Review of progress against actions set out in degree outcome statements of 2020 and 2021</u>

The University has established a robust annual cycle for the internal review and external publication of its degree outcomes. This is now embedded in Section 13 of the Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook of its Teaching Quality Assurance (TQA) Manual. This cycle is overseen by the Degree Outcomes Steering Group, a formally constituted sub-committee of the University's Education Board (formerly known as Board of the Faculty of Taught Programmes), which commissions, disseminates, and enhances the accessibility and understanding of,

Supporting the appointment and overseeing the induction of the new Principal External Examiner;

Gaining approval for, and making amendments to the Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook

The Supplemental Report concluded that:

> "What is clear is that the No Detriment Policy (NDP) did not represent a relaxation of academic standards causing significant increases in the proportion of 'good honours degrees'. The vast majority of students obtained a degree classification from marks, which included a significant number of examinations sat at the height of the national lockdown. NDP acted, as intended, as a 'safety net' for a small number of students who were unable to perform at a level consistent with their previous attainment. The No Detriment Policy was also not solely responsible for the observed reduction in awarding gaps. It is more likely that other changes to the type and mode of assessment had a greater impact on student attainment and thus their degree classificatiot321.7A141.92 re Wronht hxet-4( )- deg-F1CI19Tmclt uctdetypenoq 0.. /F1 12 T

The University acknowledges, however, that during the COVID-19 pandemic there were a wider range of variables, introduced by changes to teaching, learning and assessment, as well as support for students' health and wellbeing, which may have impacted on degree outcomes.

The University has already commenced its review of its provisional 2021-22 degree outcomes data. During this period, certain elements of its previous emergency policies were maintained for those students who had completed credit-bearing modules during the COVID-19 impacted academic years, the marks from which contributed to their final degree classification. However, provisional data would appear to support the conclusions of the University's previous analysis in that change in the modes and methods of assessment were more influential on degree outcomes than the specific 'safet   %   corh   %   corh

Further analyses are required to fully understand the factors that have influenced both the increase and now reduction in the award of 'Good Honours Degrees' over the past three academic years. Additional qualitative and quantitative data and information will be gathered to facilitate this, which will provide a focus for the continuing work of the Degree Outcomes Steering Group during 2022-23. Such analyses will also support the University's work in reviewing and developing its future assessment strategies, including learning from recent COVID-19 pandemic driven innovations, as part of its 'Assessment Reimagined' Project.

3.4   <u>Commitment to continue to analyse year-to-year variation and trends in awarding patterns to ensure the academic integrity and enduring value of University of Exeter Awards</u>

The University is committed to ensuring the academic integrity and enduring value of Exeter degrees and that the knowledge, skills and professional competencies its graduates attain are in line with the Higher Education sector's recognised standards.

The Degree Outcomes Steering Group, in association with the University's Education and Student Experience Senior Leadership Team and Principal External Examiner, have reviewed the Office for Students' (OfS) <u>Analysis of Degree Classifications over Time (2010-11 to 2020-21),</u> and the accompany4.55 526.87 Tm0 G3(20)-5 0.8 0 RG4BT/F 12 Tf1 0 0 1 215.81 466.63 Tm0 0.49 0.41

During the 2021/22 academic year, for example, the University developed a Degree Outcomes Benchmarking Report. This utilises Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) degree classifications data collated by JISC to present comparisons of the University degree classifications with the Russell Group, the University's self-selected Competitor Group and the sector as a whole. Academic colleagues across the Faculties and Departments are now encouraged to access and consider the data and information provided in the Benchmarking Report. This will help to inform dialogues about academic standards at programme, Department and Faculty level and feed into reviews of assessment design, marking practices and moderation.

Opportunities for marking calibration activity between Departments within the same and different Faculties, or between related subjects and programmes at different institutions will also be explored. Raising awareness of available data and how it can be interpreted and used is seen as critical. The University is, therefore, developing communication plans and developmental events for academic colleagues, which will be introduced during the 2022-23 academic year, to support them in making effective use of the available data and analyses to assure academic standards.

In addition, the data and information provided by the Benchmarking Report and other degree outcomes reports will be shared with the University's programme-level External Examiners to assist them in undertaking their roles and responsibilities. It should enable them to determine whether or not the University's degree outcomes are comparable to similar programmes and subjects elsewhere in the sector, beyond their own institution or others they have experienced in an External Examining capacity.

3.5   An explanation of how sector-supported principles on degree algorithms and external examiners are being followed

The University endorses, and will seek to align its policies and procedures, with the principles set out by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), UUK and GuildHE in their 2020 publication Principles for Effective Degree Algorithm Design.

The principles have been reviewed by the Degree Outcomes Steering Group and whilst the University is confident that its current algorithm for determining the classification of degrees and other Higher Education awards meet these requirements, it is committed to undertake further reviews when needed. For example, it would schedule a review to assure itself that any policy changes had not had an adverse effect on either the integrity of Exeter degrees, or on its strategic commitment to ensuring success for all its students.