

Working out your Class of Honours

The credit needed for an honours degree

Qualification for an OU honours degree requires you to successfully complete at least 360 credits. Of these, at least 240 must be at OU second level or higher and, of those, at least 120 must be at OU third level.

The honours classification process

We calculate the class of your bachelors honours degree using the results on all your graded OU or approved collaborative scheme modules at OU second level or higher - up to 240 credits.

For some of our degrees, up to 240 credits can come from an award of credit transfer in recognition of study successfully completed elsewhere. Your performance in any work for which an award of credit transfer has been made is not taken into account so, for some students on some of our degrees, the calculation of the class of honours could be based on as little as 120 credits from modules at OU third level. But in most cases, it will be the full 240 credits.

Each degree has a rule that specifies the modules that can be counted in classification. You can check this by looking at the information about your particular degree on our website at www.open.ac.uk/student. Within that rule, we always choose your best grades. Normally these will be given for each module as one of Distinction (1), Pass grade 2, Pass grade 3 or Pass grade 4.

We take the grades you obtain in your best 120 credits at OU third level and, using the calculation shown in examples 1 and 2 below, we give them twice their score. Then we add to that score the score for the rest of your credits that are in the calculation. This gives a total number of weighted grade credits.

If you have the maximum of 240 credits included in the calculation, the resulting number will be somewhere between 360 and 1440. As the aim is to produce one of four classes of honours, we divide this range into quarters as shown in the tables below.

We then perform a quality assurance test. In this, we check that your best 60 credits from OU third level modules is as good as, or better than, the class of honours indicated by the number previously calculated. You need to satisfy both tests to qualify for the class of honours.

We use only result grades from OU or collaborative scheme modules at OU second level or higher that have been approved to count in the classification of that qualification. We select modules in grade order, starting with your best grades. If you have the same grade for several modules, we start with the earliest. If you have more than one module with the same grade awarded at the same time, we take them in alpha-numeric order of their module code.

Threshold scores for students who have the full 240 credits

First class	630 or less weighted grade credits
Upper second class	631 to 900 weighted grade credits
Lower second class	901 to 1170 weighted grade credits
Third class	1171 to 1440 weighted grade credits

If you have an award of transferred credit that means you have less than the full 240 credits of graded OU modules at OU second level or higher available to classify your degree, these thresholds are reduced pro-rata and tabulated in [Table 3](#). Honours degree classification students with less than 240 OU credits available. The arithmetic for this is more complicated. If you are in this position and attempt to do the calculation yourself, you may wish to check with an adviser at the Credit, Qualifications and Ceremonies Centre that you have the correct outcome. Contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

Thresholds used in the quality assurance test

First class	at least 60 credits at Distinction grade
Upper second class	61 to 120 grade credits
Lower second class	121 to 180 grade credits
Third class	181 to 240 grade credits

To illustrate the arithmetic involved, here are two worked examples.

Table 1 Worked example number 1

Maddie Simpson completed her OU BA (Honours) degree in Modern Language Studies (B30).

	Credits	Grade of pass	Weighted grade credits	Quality assurance
L310	60	3 (x 2)	360	
E300	60	2 (x 2)	240	120
AA305	60	2		
L211	60	3	180	
U210	60	3	180	
DD121	30	Pass		
L120	30	4		
Total	360		960	120

- Of the modules Maddie has taken at OU second level or higher, AA305 is not approved to count in the honours classification for this degree so even though the grade is better than the grade she got for L310, it is not used in the classification process.
- E300 and L310 are approved to count in the classification process for this degree and so it is the grades that Maddie got for these 120 credits that are used as her double-weighted, OU third level work for classification purposes. These give her $(60 \times 2) + (60 \times 3) = 300$ grade credits. Multiplying this by 2 gives 600 weighted grade credits.

- L211 and U210 are also approved to count in the classification process for this degree and provide the grades for the additional 120 credits to go into the calculation. They give $(60 \times 3) + (60 \times 3) = 360$ grade credits.
- Adding these two scores together gives Maddie a total of 960 weighted grade credits.
- Matching this score against the thresholds (960 is more than 900 but less than 1170), indicates a lower second class honours degree.
- In the quality assurance test, Maddie scores $60 \times 2 = 120$ grade credits. Matching this score against the thresholds indicates an upper second class honours degree. However, since both tests need to be passed to qualify for a particular class of honours, the correct outcome for Maddie is a lower second class.

Table 2 Worked example number 2

Rajiv Shah completed his OU honours degree in Mathematics and Statistics (B36).

	Credits	Grade of pass	Weighted grade credits	Quality assurance
M381	30	3 (x 2)	180	
MT365	30	2 (x 2)	120	60
M346	30	3 (x 2)	180	
M343	30	1 (x 2)	60	30
MST209	60	2	120	
MS221	30	1	30	
M249	30	2	60	
M248	30	2		
MST121	30	Pass		
Credit transfer	60			
Total	360		750	90

- All the modules Rajiv has taken at OU second level or higher are approved to count in the honours classification for this degree.
- Although Rajiv has some transferred credit counting in his degree, he still has 240 credits from graded OU modules at OU second level or higher available for classification.
- Rajiv's best grades in 120 credits of OU study at OU third level are in M343, MT365, M346 and M381. Together, these give him $(30 \times 1) + (30 \times 2) + (60 \times 3) = 270$ grade credits. Multiplying this by 2 gives 540 weighted grade credits.
- The additional 120 credits for work at OU second level or higher (for MS221, M249 and MST209) give $(30 \times 1) + (90 \times 2) = 210$ grade credits.
- Adding the two together gives him a total of 750 weighted grade credits.
- Matching this score against the thresholds (750 is more than 630 but less than 900), indicates an upper second class honours degree.

- In the quality assurance test, Rajiv scores $(30 \times 1) + (30 \times 2) = 90$ grade credits. Matching this score against the thresholds also indicates an upper second class honours degree. Both tests have been passed and so this is the correct outcome.

What credit is counted in your honours degree

Credit from the specified list of modules must be linked to your qualification for that qualification to be formally conferred on you. You may be able to do this yourself online through StudentHome or you can ask the Centre for Qualifications and Ceremonies to do it for you. Once you get close to the completion of your degree, you are no longer permitted to do this yourself but you may be able to make changes by asking the Centre for Qualifications and Ceremonies to do it for you. We can be contacted on 01908 653003 or acc-gen@open.ac.uk. Conferment is the final, legal act of awarding an academic qualification.

Degrees in subjects are awarded as honours degrees¹ the Open degree is awarded with and without honours

If your credit is counted towards the Open degree, it is highly likely that you will qualify for the degree without honours before you qualify for it with honours. In that case, the degree will be conferred on you without honours before it is conferred on you with honours. Once the degree without honours has been conferred on you, the credit in that degree is locked into it. More credit can be added to enable you to qualify for it with honours but, once it has been conferred on you, none of the credit in that Open degree awarded without honours can be removed from it.

Counting credit from modules at postgraduate-level in your honours degree

The rules for some of our honours degrees allow credit from postgraduate-level study to be counted towards the credit required for the degree. In most of these cases, such credit can only be counted as part of a 'free choice' component. Some honours degrees permit performance in modules in any 'free choice' component to count in the calculation of the class of honours; others do not. The particular rule for each degree is set out in the regulations for each of them. In all cases, the Academic Regulations (Taught Courses) has set an institution-wide upper limit of 90 credits from postgraduate-level work that can be counted towards a bachelors degree awarded with honours.

Being at an academic level that is more advanced than undergraduate-level, in degrees where that policy can be used in practice, that postgraduate-level credit is permitted to count at the highest, undergraduate level possible in that degree. Sometimes that will be OU third level; sometimes all the OU third level credit required must come from specified undergraduate-level modules and any postgraduate credit can only be counted at a lower level. However it can be counted, it is important to note that differences between the grading schemes for postgraduate-level and undergraduate-level modules can mean that the honours degree classification scheme is not able to interpret the performance in postgraduate-level work in the same way as it would for undergraduate-level work and this

¹ there is an exception to this general rule which is the BA degree in Early Years which can also be awarded with and without honours

might work to your detriment if you can and do choose to count credit from postgraduate-level work in your bachelors honours degree.

Classification of second or subsequent honours degrees

There is an institution-wide rule that prohibits the grades from OU modules or approved collaborative scheme work that have been used as the OU third level credit required in the calculation of a class of honours for one OU honours degree being used at all in the calculation of the class of honours of a second or subsequent OU bachelors degree awarded with honours².

Is it possible to improve my class of honours?

Once you have:

- sufficient credit in total
- a particular profile that satisfies the detailed rules of the honours degree for which you have asked for it to be counted

you will be informed of your eligibility for it. That notification will include the class of honours for which you are eligible.

Depending on the precise rules for the classification of your degree, you may be able to improve the class of honours. In all cases this will involve you successfully completing further credit from OU modules or from an approved collaborative scheme. For many of our honours degrees, the classification process looks for the best grades you have obtained so the addition of further credit with (a) better grade(s) that could be used in that process could lead to you being eligible for an improved class of honours. For some of our honours degrees, the scheme of classification requires your performance in a particular module or modules to be included in the calculation of the class of honours whether or not it is among your best grades. The precise rule for each degree is set out in the regulations for it.

Having completed that further work, for an OU honours degree in a subject that is only available as an honours degree, you can choose either:

- To unlink credit with a poor grade in favour of credit with a better grade so long as the profile of credit you have still meets all the requirements of the degree in question
or
- to add the new credit with the better grade and allow the classification scheme to find and work out your class of honours based on the revised profile of 'best grades' you have.

For the Open degree, your options will probably be more limited since it is likely that most of your credit will have been already counted in an Open degree conferred on you without honours. Since all that credit contained in that conferred degree cannot be removed, your option would be simply to add the new credit with the better result grade. The classification

² See the Academic Regulations (Taught Courses) for details

scheme for the Open degree automatically and always looks for and works out your class of honours based on your 'best grades'.

Students with less than 240 OU credits available

Table 3 Honours degree classification

Amount of OU credit available	First Class 1		Upper Second Class 2.1		Lower Second Class 2.2		Third Class 3	
	Weighted Grade Credit From	Weighted Grade Credit To	Weighted Grade Credit From	Weighted Grade Credit To	Weighted Grade Credit From	Weighted Grade Credit To	Weighted Grade Credit From	Weighted Grade Credit To
240	360	630	630.1	900	900.1	1170	1170.1	1440
235	355	621.25	621.35	887.5	887.6	1153.75	1153.85	1420
230	350	612.5	612.6	875	875.1	1137.5	1137.6	1400
225	345	603.75	603.85	862.5	862.6	1121.25	1121.35	1380
220	340	595	595.1	850	850.1	1105	1105.1	1360
215	335	586.25	586.35	837.5	837.6	1088.75	1088.85	1340
210	330	577.5	577.6	825	825.1	1072.5	1072.6	1320
205	325	568.75	568.85	812.5	812.6	1056.25	1056.35	1300
200	320	560	560.1	800	800.1	1040	1040.1	1280
195	315	551.25	551.35	787.5	787.6	1023.75	1023.85	1260
190	310	542.5	542.6	775	775.1	1007.5	1007.6	1240
185	305	533.75	533.85	762.5	762.6	991.25	991.35	1220
180	300	525	525.1	750	750.1	975	975.1	1200
175	295	516.25	516.35	737.5	737.6	958.75	958.85	1180
170	290	507.5	507.6	725	725.1	942.5	942.6	1160
165	285	498.75	498.85	712.5	712.6	926.25	926.35	1140
160	280	490	490.1	700	700.1	910	910.1	1120
155	275	481.25	481.35	687.5	687.6	893.75	893.85	1100
150	270	472.5	472.6	675	675.1	877.5	877.6	1080
145	265	463.75	463.85	662.5	662.6	861.25	861.35	1060
140	260	455	455.1	650	650.1	845	845.1	1040
135	255	446.25	446.35	637.5	637.6	828.75	828.85	1020
130	250	437.5	437.6	625	625.1	812.5	812.6	1000
125	245	428.75	428.85	612.5	612.6	796.25	796.35	980
120	240	420	420.1	600	600.1	780	780.1	960

Contact us

If you are unsure about how this applies to your degree, contact the Centre for Qualifications and Ceremonies Centre by email at:

acc-gen@open.ac.uk

or phone us on 01908 653003

Summary of change

April 2015

Table 3 Honours degree classification - First Class 1 "Weighted grade credit from" value change from 0.

February 2016

Removed references to specific regulations and to refer to the new documents.

The Open University Student Services

