



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

University of Worcester

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at University of Worcester and the outcomes it leads to are very high quality

Student experience: Silver

The student academic experience is typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting learning, progression, and attainment
- course content and delivery effectively encourage students to engage in their learning, and stretch students to develop their knowledge and skills
- research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, and employer engagement contribute to a very high quality academic experience.

There are also some outstanding quality features including:

- support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider
- physical and virtual learning resources are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning.

embedded engagement with its students, leading to continuous improvement to the experiences and outcomes

Student outcomes: Silver

Student outcomes are typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- effective support for students to succeed in and progress successfully beyond their studies
- very high rates of continuation and completion for students and courses
- very high rates of successful progression for students and courses
- effective support for students to achieve education gains
- effective evaluation of educational gains.

There is also one outstanding quality features:

- a clearly articulated range of educational gains the provider intends its students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to its students and their future ambitions.

About the assessment

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is a national scheme run by the Office for Students (OfS) that aims to encourage universities and colleges (providers) to improve and deliver excellent teaching, learning and student outcomes.

The TEF does this by assessing and rating providers for excellence above the high quality baseline that we expect from all providers. It covers undergraduate courses.

Throughout this document, we use the terms ‘outstanding’ and ‘very high quality’, which are defined in terms of the TEF 2023 assessment as follows:

- ‘outstanding’: the quality of the student experience or outcomes are among the very best in the sector, for the mix of students and courses taught by a provider
- ‘very high quality’: the quality of the student experience or outcomes are materially above the relevant high quality minimum requirements, for the mix of students and courses taught by a provider.

The assessment was carried out in 2022-23 by the TEF Panel, a panel of academics and students who are experts in learning and teaching. This document sets out a summary of the panel’s findings and judgements.

The panel reviewed the following evidence:

- numerical indicators produced by the OfS, using national datasets
- a submission made by the provider, setting out its own evidence
- a submission made by the provider’s students, setting out students’ views.

The panel applied its expert judgement to:

- identify particular features of the student experience and student outcomes that are excellent (above the high quality baseline requirements)
- decide a rating for the ‘student experience’ and for ‘student outcomes’
- decide an overall rating for the provider.

Throughout the assessment the panel took account of the context of the provider and judged how well it delivers teaching, learning and student outcomes for its mix of students and courses.

In making its decisions the panel took account of the OfS general duties and the public sector equalities duty.

Summary of panel assessment

Information about this provider

The University of Worcester's mission is to be a beacon for social mobility, inclusion and opportunity. It describes itself as an open, meritocratic institution that proactively seeks out people capable of benefitting from higher education, minimises barriers to their participation, and contributes to the expansion of higher education opportunities locally, nationally, and internationally.

The provider submission highlights the wide backgrounds that its cohorts come from and how this feeds into its ethos of inclusion. The provider aims to be an 'engine of opportunity', supporting its students to benefit from an educational experience that is personally transformative and allows them to succeed in their chosen career.

The provider is relatively small, with 8,560 full time undergraduate students and 1,440 part time students in 2020-21. Large percentages study education and teaching (14.2 per cent), sport and exercise sciences (13 per cent), nursing and midwifery (12.9 per cent), allied health (10.3 per cent), and business and management (8.3 per cent) with the remaining students split relatively evenly across remaining subject areas.

There is a relatively high number of mature students, with 20.3 per cent between 21 and 30, and 14.5 per cent 31 or older on entry. The majority of students are White (80.1 per cent), 4.1 per cent are Asian and 3.8 per cent are Black. Students with declared cognitive or learning difficulties make up 7.8 per cent of the cohort, and the majority of students (68.7 per cent) are female.

The assessment considered information about the provider's undergraduate courses and students on those courses.

Full details about the provider's student demographics used in the TEF 2023 assessment are available at <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/data-used-in-tef-2023/>

More information about this provider can be found on the OfS Register at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/the-register/the-ofs-register/.

Student experience: Silver

Throughout this section, we refer to indicators. These indicators are based on students' responses to the National Student Survey. The indicators are 'benchmarked' to show how well the provider performs for its particular mix of students and courses.

The panel found the student academic experience is typically very high quality for the provider's mix of students and courses. The provider effectively supports its students to achieve very high quality student outcomes and educational gains.

Across the student outcomes aspect, the panel found:

- four features are of very high quality, and three are outstanding
- the very high quality and outstanding features apply to all the provider's groups of students
- none of the features are clearly below the level of 'very high quality' or of concern
- the provider embeds effective approaches and tailors its approaches to its students, including students from underrepresented groups.

The panel considered 'Silver' as the best fit rating, because 'all features are very high quality for most groups of students and courses'. It did not think that 'Gold' would be the best fit because only 'some' rather than 'most' of the student outcomes features are of outstanding quality.

The panel's assessment of the student experience features is set out below.

Teaching, assessment, and feedback; Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The panel considered these features together and found them both to be very high quality.

The 'teaching on my course' indicator for full time students provides initial evidence of very high quality. The 'assessment and feedback' indicator for full time students provides initial evidence of very high or outstanding quality.

The provider submission sets out its approach to teaching, assessment, and feedback as well as its course content, delivery, and student engagement in learning, including:

- 45 per cent of graduates are on degree programmes which are accredited by professional, statutory, or regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and there is evidence of strong endorsement of practices by these bodies
- curriculum and course design and delivery is designed with employability and the provider's graduate attributes as core themes.
- teaching is delivered through discipline-based conceptual and theoretical learning, together with applied and work-based educational experiences

- 'assessment and feedback' is driven by a comprehensive and regularly reviewed policy
- all courses review and recalibrate assessment criteria against university updated generic grade descriptors, which ensures consistency.

The student submission speaks broadly about how students have a positive teaching and learning experience, and how they are eager to engage in their studies. 89 per cent of students surveyed agree or strongly agree that their assessment feedback supports their learning.

The provider has embedded very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment. The panel consider that there is sufficient evidence of a very high quality feature.

The provider's course content and delivery effectively encourage students to engage in their learning, and stretch students to develop their knowledge and skills. Overall, the panel considered that there is sufficient evidence of a very high quality feature.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

The panel considered this to be a very high quality feature.

Evidence in the provider submission includes:

- research-inspired and research-led teaching and assessment design is a core part of the curriculum
- 45 per cent of graduates in scope of the assessment are on a PSRB accredited course
- scholarship is promoted through communities of practice and other staff development opportunities, which enables teaching excellence to be embedded across the provider's portfolio
- substantial networks for employer engagement, leading to a focus on applied, work-related and real-world learning, with a large portion of its provision featuring placement learning.

The panel judged that the provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, and employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for its students. Overall, the panel considered that this is a very high quality feature.

Staff professional development and academic practice

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Evidence in the provider submission includes:

- satisfactory teaching observations, informed by the UK Professional Standards Framework, are a key requirement of the probationary year for new members of teaching staff

- 72.4 per cent of teaching staff have fellowship of the Higher Education Academy at some level, compared with the sector average of only 46.1 per cent
- a university teaching awards scheme focussed on recognition of innovation and excellence
- an annual learning, teaching and student experience conference celebrates teaching excellence and innovation, and attracts high quality and high participation. The conference has stimulated the development of communities of practice
- the provider tailors and targets professional development according to the needs of specific course teams, and the activity is linked to agreed action and adjustments to pedagogy and practice.

Overall, the evidence noted that the evidence provided indicates that there is outstanding support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider. The panel conclude that there is sufficient evidence of an outstanding quality feature.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel considered this to be a very high quality feature.

The 'academic support' indicator provides initial evidence of a very high quality feature for full time students. The panel judged that the same indicator for part time students provided insufficient evidence, and judged it as a neutral source of evidence.

The provider submission sets out its approach to its learning environment and academic support, including:

- a programme advisory service to help students make appropriate academic decisions. It is described as 'well used' but there is no evidence to evaluate this
- personal academic tutors are adapted at school level to provide appropriate support for students, including those from underrepresented groups
- there is a strong sense of community, built through a programme of activities and initiatives
- academic societies are actively promoted, and supported by £50 credit for membership
- support for disabled students includes a university created online resource to promote inclusive approaches to learning support.

The student submission outlines that 90 per cent of students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the provider creates a supportive learning environment. Comments indicate that support is around whenever it is needed, that there is a focus on inclusion with excellent support for underrepresented groups. There are, however, reoccurring comments around disorganisation, difficulties with lack of communication around staff absences, and some adjustments not being met.

Overall, the panel judged that the provider fosters a supportive learning environment, and its students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support. The panel consider that there is sufficient evidence of a very high quality feature.

Learning resources

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The 'learning resources' indicator for full time students provides initial evidence of outstanding quality. The panel judged that the same indicator for part time students provided insufficient evidence, and judged it as a neutral source of evidence.

The provider submission outlines its approach to learning resources, including:

- the Hive, Europe's first joint university and public library, which builds a sense of community and social mobility.
- mystery shopper exercises benchmark the provider's services positively against the services of other universities. Mystery shoppers are deliberately recruited from hard to reach and underrepresented groups in order to test accessibility and inclusion
- student engagement coordinators manage and evaluate a range of student projects
- adaptable teaching accommodation and modern facilities such as: the art house, which includes flexible studio and exhibition spaces; the law teaching accommodation with a mock court and mooted facilities; and the development of the clinical skills and simulation centre with 10 state-of-the-art clinical simulation suites of varying sizes.

The student submission reinforces the provider's statements around consistent high levels of performance in the areas of facilities. It outlines how students worked closely with the university to address digital poverty amongst students during coronavirus.

In considering the available evidence, the panel judged that the provider's physical and virtual learning resources are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning. The panel considered therefore that there is sufficient evidence of an outstanding quality feature.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The 'student voice' indicator provides initial evidence of outstanding quality for full time students. The panel judged that the same indicator for part time students provided insufficient evidence, and judged it as a neutral source of evidence.

The provider submission sets out its approach to student voice and student engagement, including:

- a student academic representation system, overseen by a joint students' union/university subcommittee. All courses have a student course representative, and bespoke training is available to elected representatives devised in partnership by the students' union and school academic representation coordinators

- 'students as academic partners' runs paid projects to develop teaching innovation, which integrates students into academic cultures and communities of practice
- students are full members of course approval and departmental review panels
- a 'learning community' which helps address issues such as closing the feedback loop within student voice.

The student submission highlights areas of strong student voice and partnership working across the institutions, to address issues both proactively and in response to student feedback. There is a clear sense that students have a voice and are listened to, with their feedback being actioned by the provider.

The provider embeds engagement with its students, leading to continuous improvement to the experiences and outcomes of its students. The panel considered therefore that there is sufficient evidence of an outstanding quality feature.

Student outcomes: Silver

Throughout this section, we refer to indicators. The indicators for continuation, completion and progression rates are based on national data about higher education students. The indicators are 'benchmarked' to show how well the provider performs for its particular mix of students and courses.

The panel found student outcomes are typically very high quality for the provider's mix of students and courses.

Across the student outcomes aspect, the panel found:

- the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in, and progress beyond, their studies. Approaches to supporting student success are rated as very high quality
- five features are rated as very high quality, and one is rated outstanding
- no features were considered to be of concern.

The panel considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Silver' as the aspect is typically very high quality. It judged that the available evidence best fits the Silver rating description that 'all features are very high quality for most groups of students and courses'. It did not think that 'Gold' would be the best fit because only 'some' rather than 'most' of the student outcomes features are of outstanding quality.

The panel's assessment of the student outcomes features is set out below.

Approaches to supporting student success

The panel considered this to be a very high quality feature.

The provider submission describes university-wide interventions used to support student retention, completion, and progression. However, there is limited evidence for targeted interventions beyond descriptive segments.

Examples of evidence found within the provider submission include:

- a 'student retention and success framework', setting out strategic objectives at each stage of the student lifecycle that provides a basis for a whole institution approach to enhancement activities and projects
- a structured communications and support strategy to encourage students who temporarily withdrew to return to study
- additional dedicated support for international students where diagnostic assessments indicate a need
- investment in simulated work-based learning to support students in developing professional practice
- near universal availability of work placements and other work-related opportunities inside and outside of the formal curriculum
- employer and community engagement, and use of experts in the field to inform curricula and provide learning opportunities.

The student submission contains limited evidence for this feature of the aspect, and as such limited weight was placed on it when formulating the rating for this feature.

Overall it was judged that the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in and progress successfully beyond their studies. The panel considered this a very high quality feature.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel considered this to be a very high quality feature.

The 'continuation' indicator for full time students provides initial evidence that the provider's performance does not meet the level of very high quality. However, the 'completion' indicator does provide initial evidence of very high quality. The panel judged that the same indicators for part time students provided insufficient evidence, and judged them as a neutral source of evidence.

The provider submission explains why the continuation rate for full time students is low, describing how a mistake in data reporting has skewed the indicators. The panel considered this a plausible explanation. The student submission contains limited evidence continuation and completion rates, and as such the panel placed limited weight on it.

Overall, the indicators provided mixed evidence of both a not very high quality and a very high quality feature. Across the remaining available evidence, the panel concluded that there is evidence of very high rates of continuation and completion for its students and courses, once the error in data reporting was accounted for. Therefore, the panel concluded that this is a very high quality feature.

Progression rates

The panel considered this to be a very high quality feature.

The 'progression' indicator provides initial evidence of very high quality for full time students. The panel judged that the same indicator for part time students provided insufficient evidence, and judged it as a neutral source of evidence.

The provider outlines its approach to achieving these progression indicators including:

- investment in simulated work-based learning to support students in developing professional practice
- embedded employability in course curricula, which focus on the applied and 'real world' application of learning and assessment
- near universal availability of work placements and other work-related opportunities inside and outside of the formal curriculum
- employer and community engagement and use of experts in the field to inform curricula and provide learning opportunities.

After considering the evidence, it was judged that the provider has very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses. The panel considered that there is sufficient evidence of a very high quality feature.

Intended educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission articulates 'educational gains' as highlighted in its graduate attributes: social responsibility; reflective and resilient lifelong learning; digital citizenship; problem solving; teamwork; and effective communication.

It explains how these gains are relevant to all students, and that some educational gains will be gained on an individual basis by students to match their experiences and aspirations. Its educational gains are embedded within strategy and are influenced by several institutional drivers, including:

- commitments to the principles of inclusion, diversity, and equality, realising potential and social mobility
- excellent graduate outcomes in relation to sustained employment that is 'meaningful', 'relevant' and 'fits with future plans'
- placing graduate attributes at the centre of what the provider wants to measure
- conviction that its approach must be efficient, effective, and beneficial to all stakeholders.

The panel judged that the provider clearly articulates the range educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to its students and their future ambitions. The panel considered therefore that there is sufficient evidence of an outstanding quality feature.

Approaches to supporting educational gains; Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered these two features together, and found them both to be very high quality. Evidence to support this includes:

- the embedding of educational gains through a set of graduate attributes, which informs curriculum and assessment design
- employability is embedded within the curriculum, with a number of programmes having research-informed designs which mimic professional life
- all courses offer work-related experience, through placements or work project modules. The provider works closely with employer representatives to deliver partnerships that support the development and take up of these opportunities
- there is significant support toward completion, continuation, and progression.

There is, however, limited evidence within the provider submission of evaluation of its intended educational gains. Analysis is typically done through looking at indicators for student outcomes as well as further graduate outcome data, including Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) and Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data. The provider submission describes how it intends to develop further mechanisms for evaluation of intended gains, but does not yet have a well-developed measure.

The panel considered therefore that there is sufficient evidence of two very high quality features, and that the provider effectively supports its students to achieve education gains, and also effectively evaluates these gains.

Overall: Silver

The panel judged that the rating for student experience was 'Silver' and the rating for student outcomes was 'Silver'.

The panel found all student experience features to be very high quality across most groups of students and courses, and student outcomes features to be of very high quality across most groups of students. The panel also found some outstanding quality student experience and outcomes features.

Considering the overall evidence, the panel judged that the overall 'best fit' rating is 'Silver'.