



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

University of Oxford

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Gold

Typically, the experience students have at University of Oxford and the outcomes it leads to are outstanding.

Student experience: Gold

The student academic experience is typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- the provider has embedded outstanding teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are tailored to the needs of its students
- course content and delivery inspire and actively engage students to develop to their fullest potential
- strategic, embedded and policy driven approach to the use of research
- outstanding learning resources via world class libraries, museums, and collections, including college based and online resources.

There are also some very high quality features including:

- high quality support for staff's professional development and the promotion of excellent academic practice
- a supportive learning environment, where students have access to very high quality academic support
- effective engagement with students leading to continuous improvements in academic experiences and outcomes.

Student outcomes: Gold

Student outcomes are typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- highly structured and strategic approach to integrating learning and teaching mechanisms with academic support for student success in continuation, completion and progression
- outstanding approaches to supporting continuation, completion and progression for its mix of students
- outstanding approaches to supporting student progression for the mix of students (including students from underrepresented groups) and courses
- intended educational gains in a coherent and shared framework, promoting interdisciplinary thinking, research skills and digital capabilities.

There is also one very high quality feature including:

- highly effective approaches to supporting its students to achieve educational gains through tailored support.

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

University of Oxford is a globally recognised, collegiate and research-intensive university. It offers education through close collaboration between university departments and colleges. Each college consists of an interdisciplinary community with world leading research staff.

Full-time students are members of a department and a college, the latter of which are legally independent entities. Over the four year TEF period, the provider has around 79,020 students of whom 47,130 (59.6 per cent) are undergraduate full time, 3 years or more. First degree is 27,600 (34.9 per cent) students and Undergraduate with Postgraduate Components is 19,390 (24.5 per cent). 94 per cent of its students are studying full-time while 6 per cent are studying part-time.

Subject departments at The Chancellor, Masters, and Scholars of the University of Oxford are grouped into four divisions. There are 22 subject areas/courses with the largest areas being in History (5,730), Languages and Area Studies (4,310) and Medicine (3,940).

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

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: Gold

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 TEF panel considered all the evidence in the indicators and the submissions relating to the student experience aspect as a whole and determined the student experience aspect rating to be 'Gold'.

The panel noted that the provider does not have published indicators for this aspect, given an NSS boycott during the TEF time period. Therefore, the provider used its own evidence from the most recent two years of the NSS, as well as Student Barometer data to show performance for the student experience features for all courses and groups of students.

Given the lack of published student experience data, the panel placed more weight on evidence in the submission, and considered the evidence presented holistically.

It found evidence that:

- four features were outstanding
- three features were of very high quality

The panel judged there to be compelling evidence that the very high quality and outstanding features apply to all courses and groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups.

The panel therefore considered the best fit rating overall to be 'Gold'

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

Teaching, assessment, and feedback

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider and student submissions provide evidence regarding the effectiveness and tailoring of teaching, assessment, and feedback practices, which applies to underrepresented groups and all courses at the provider.

Evidence in the provider submission from their own available data includes indications of high rates of satisfaction with 'teaching on my course'; very high level of satisfaction with teaching and learning; and timely and comprehensive feedback for students and the expertise and quality of the academic staff.

Other evidence in the submissions includes:

- a strategic, embedded and policy-driven approach to excellence in students' academic experience, with highly personalised ways of learning and regular formative assessments and a personalised approach to students' understanding of feedback and progress

- teaching primarily undertaken by senior members of academic staff, exemplifying the shared commitment to the central importance and value of teaching
- interaction between student and tutor as two-way, formatively assessed, with a coherent incremental structure, supplemented by expert lectures, seminars, classes, research, placements and where relevant, fieldwork
- a Digital Education Strategy that provides an overarching vision for optimising technology use in the context of in person learning, with an enhancement focus and enabling more inclusive approaches to teaching.

Overall, the panel judged that the provider has embedded outstanding teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are highly effective and tailored to supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment.

The panel therefore considered that this is to be an outstanding quality feature.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission demonstrates in its own data that students feel their courses are intellectually challenging, and have high rates of satisfaction with course content and delivery for its mix of students, including underrepresented groups.

There are a number of examples in the provider submission which was considered to be outstanding, such as:

- a common core curriculum in first year followed by increasing specialisation through a large range of options combined with guided support for module and programme choice
- course design and review is carried out by senior academic research and teaching staff in departments, supported by the Centre for Teaching and Learning and overseen by periodic review.

The student submission indicates that students believe their tutorials and classes are engaging and that they feel comfortable discussing their academic progress.

Overall, the panel concluded that outstanding course content and delivery practices are embedded across the provider, inspiring commitment to learning and stretch for all students groups.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

The panel considered this to be an outstanding feature.

The provider submission outlines evidence of:

- a strategic, embedded and policy driven approach to the use of research translating to outstanding results in the Research Excellence Framework to provision of teaching by

senior academic staff as researchers

- student exposure to cutting edge research by providing opportunities for students to engage as active researchers across all disciplines
- a systematic approach to embedding research in student learning across STEM and Medicine and Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, facilitating transition to further study or professional careers and enhances specialised knowledge and research methodologies
- external validation for research in undergraduate education through external discipline prizes and research publications
- a vibrant academic community that sees over 150 extra-curricular events, seminars and guest lectures each week.

The student submission gives evidence of:

- a very high percentage of students satisfaction with the level of research activity on their course, noting a range of excellent and highly supported options and super-curricula interests available to students.

The panel considered that the submissions include evidence regarding outstanding research and innovation, in which students are engaged, and which apply to the mix of students, including students from underrepresented groups and courses at the provider.

Therefore, the panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Staff professional development and academic practice

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

The panel considered evidence of outstanding and very high quality practice, including:

- institutional structures underpinning the significance placed on teaching, with staff required to demonstrate effective teaching to successfully complete probation
- an established Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) that provides professional development, staff training and resources, including a Racially Inclusive Teaching Toolkit to promote positive student learning outcomes.
- a Preparation for Learning and Teaching at Oxford (PLTO) course for doctoral students and post-doctoral staff who wish to teach, and long standing support for the development of learning and teaching,
- a fellowship scheme mapped onto the UK Professional Standards Framework under which 46 staff have been awarded fellowships.

The student submission indicates that students welcome the contribution of the CTL to enhance skills for teachers with the aim of greater inclusivity and accessibility. However, the panel noted the number of staff on professional courses and staff training for education are relatively modest, and

there is less detail in the submissions on how education practice is embedded across courses and how innovation in pedagogy is supported.

Overall, the panel concluded that the submissions include evidence that professional development of staff and academic practice are very high quality.

Learning environment and academic support

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

The provider submission describes an excellent learning environment and rich opportunities for academic support. The panel noted:

- evidence from the provider's own data on very high levels of agreement, with a feeling of being part of a close-knit community of staff and students
- significant resources to support transition to the University, including: a pre-course Opportunity Oxford programme, with online components available to students from under-represented backgrounds; extra support for students with English as an additional language; and podcasts that can be accessed through the Oxford Transition Support Portal.
- A tutorial system where students have at least one tutor in their college and a Senior Tutors system with responsibility for the support for and progress of both students and tutors
- excellent wellbeing support available to students through welfare structures such as the Disability Advisory Service, well-rated counselling services and Oxford Student Nightline.

Evidence from the student submission corroborates these findings, however issues raised around student workload was noted. The panel also noted that the provider submission identified less student satisfaction with the timeliness of feedback, examination preparation and some variability in academic tutorial support

Overall, when balancing the evidence, the panel considered that the provider fosters a supportive learning environment and student have access very high quality academic support.

Learning resources

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission reports very high levels of engagement and satisfaction with learning resources in its own data, reporting better than sector averages on the NSS learning resources questions

The panel considered further evidence in the provider and student submission, including:

- outstanding learning resources, spaces and equipment via world class libraries, museums, and collections, college based and online resources, and a university and college structure encompassing iconic teaching, learning spaces and cutting-edge learning technologies.

- Outstanding library resources and library support services, with a library for each college targeted to its courses and students – including students from underrepresented backgrounds, and with high levels of student satisfaction for these resources

Overall, the panel considered that the provider's learning resources are tailored and used effectively to support of outstanding quality teaching and learning for all its students.

Student engagement in improvement

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

The provider submission observes that its own data analysis of NSS rates of satisfaction for student voice are lower than that of the sector. The submission also describes:

- a structured approach to policy and guidance regarding student engagement and representation, which is flexible for different student groups. A commitment to improvement with regards to student-driven change through joint working is also reflected in the student submission
- a comprehensive system of student representation, from department committees and joint consultative committees to divisional boards and their committees
- an annual Quality Report submitted to the university by the students' union for consideration and action.

The panel considered that the evidence suggests a journey of significant improvement in student engagement, but that it is unclear how systematic engagement and student representation is, or how the outcomes from feedback are acted upon.

Therefore the panel concluded that the provider and student submission give sufficient evidence that the provider effectively engages with its students to lead to improvements and that this is overall a very high quality feature.

Student outcomes: Gold

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.

In accordance with the guidance, the panel weighed up all the evidence relating to the student outcomes aspect as a whole and determined the rating to be 'Gold'.

The panel examined all the evidence for very high quality and outstanding quality features, noting that the indicators contributed no more than half of the evidence of excellence. It considered how far very high quality or outstanding features applied across all the provider's student groups and the range of its courses and subjects. It found that:

- four of the features of outstanding quality
- one feature of very high quality
- one feature with insufficient evidence to be judged a very high quality feature.

Having reviewed the evidence and the provider context holistically, the panel considered there to be evidence of outstanding provision across most features for all groups of students, and for all courses and subjects.

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

Approaches to supporting student success

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission gives evidence of a highly structured and strategic approach to integrating learning and teaching mechanisms with academic support for student success in continuation, completion and progression. Evidence includes:

- a Career Service with focus on the development of employability skills through the curriculum, tutorial system and extra-curricular opportunities, with a high rate of student satisfaction noted from the provider's own data.
- events, workshops, consultancy experience and project-based internships offered to students, as well as targeted support for work readiness, and regularly surveying of students about their career intentions
- opportunities for internships, insight short courses, and consultancy training, to develop employability skills, supplemented by over 7000 one-to-one career advice sessions each year.

Both submissions were deemed to provide evidence of outstanding approaches to supporting student success, which applies to all courses and student groups - including underrepresented groups.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider deploys a highly structured and strategic approach to embedding successful outcomes.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The overall continuation and completion indicators for both full-time and part-time students gives evidence of outstanding quality.

The panel considered the submission and indicators to provide compelling evidence of outstanding approaches to support continuation and completion, which applies to its mix of courses and students (including students from underrepresented groups), with evidence that the majority of students consistently achieve good honours.

Overall, the panel considered that there are outstanding rates of continuation for the provider's students and courses.

Progression rates

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The overall full-time and part-time indicators for progression gives evidence of outstanding quality, with consistently strong graduate employment outcomes across nearly all demographic splits.

The provider submission gives evidence of:

- a systematic approach to employability and employment, with a Careers Service that is reflective and externally focused
- micro internships of 2-5 days offered at the end of every term with 1500 exclusive opportunities.

The provider's approach to progression is endorsed by the student submission, which gives evidence of high rates of positive outcomes in the Graduate Outcome Survey.

The panel considered the submissions to include evidence regarding outstanding approaches to supporting student progression, which applies to the mix of students (including students from underrepresented groups) and courses. Overall, the panel consider this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Intended educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission gives evidence of promoting interdisciplinary thinking, research skills and digital capabilities. Further evidence includes:

- the provision of extra-curricular activities, with High Fliers (2021) research indicating that 73 per cent of finalists had been active members of a university society, club or sports team, 62 per cent had run a student society or social activity and 45 per cent had carried out voluntary or charity work.

The student submission includes evidence regarding educational gains in a coherent and shared framework. Overall, the panel considered there was sufficient evidence to demonstrate an outstanding quality feature.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

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

The provider submission gives evidence of:

- the college tutorial system playing a key role in promoting and monitoring education gains, enabling students to become independent learners

- an importance placed on interdisciplinarity, through joint courses with a focus on ‘becoming’ and thinking in the ways of a discipline.

The panel noted that approaches to supporting embedded educational gains in the curricula, delivery and outcomes are not yet systemically achieved.

Overall, however, the panel considered that the promotion of educational gains is embedded in teaching and the curriculum at the provider.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered there is insufficient evidence of this being a very high quality feature.

Evidence is framed in terms of outcomes, including progression, and also through high levels of participation and leadership in societies, clubs, and teams. However, the panel considered this evidence to be associational rather than demonstrating a causal link at present.

The panel judged therefore that there was not sufficient evidence in the provider submission to judge that this was a very high quality feature.

Overall: Gold

The panel considered the student experience aspect rating to be ‘Gold’ and the student outcomes aspect rating to be ‘Gold’.

The panel weighted these two aspects equally and considered all the evidence across all features and across all the provider’s student groups, subjects and courses to come to a ‘best fit’ decision of Gold regarding the overall rating for the provider.

In reaching this decision, the panel considered there to be compelling evidence that the outstanding and very high-quality features apply to all the provider’s groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups.

The panel found most student experience features to be of outstanding quality for all groups of students and courses and most student outcomes features to be of outstanding quality for all groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups, and courses.