



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

Royal Academy of Dramatic Art

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Gold

Typically, the experience students have at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and the outcomes it leads to are outstanding.

Student experience: Gold

The student academic experience is typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- high contact hours, small group and one-to-one tuition to support individual learning
- relevant and current courses that span the breadth of professional skills required
- highly experienced teachers who are professional practitioners in their fields. Teachers bring a connection with industry that supports students' progression and attainment of high academic and professional standards
- support is highly tailored to students' needs, and is integrated into the students' learning activities.

There are also some very high quality features including:

- specialist and industry-standard facilities and course-related resources
- effective formal and informal student communications and representation at all levels of governance.

Student outcomes: Gold

Student outcomes are typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- extensive tailored support during studies, including a very positive staff to student ratio
- outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses
- clearly articulated educational gains intended for students, including why these are highly relevant to students and their ambitions
- evidence-based, highly effective and tailored support for students to achieve these gains
- evaluation of the gains made by students.

There is also one very high quality feature:

- progression rates.

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 provider sets out its mission as a small and specialist provider to deliver 'world-leading training in the dramatic arts by cultivating exceptional talent in a community dedicated to curiosity, rigour, creativity and craft'.

All students study performing arts courses, with around half studying acting. The provider had 150 full-time undergraduate and 40 full-time postgraduate students in 2020-21. Numbers have been steady since 2017-18.

Admissions are selective. Students enter mostly with A-level qualifications, and a significant portion with BTECs or higher education level qualifications.

A significant proportion of students are mature, and a majority (52 per cent) are female. Just over two thirds of students are not from the local area, and 12.9 per cent are international. A high number of students are from underrepresented groups.

The provider has a single campus in London. There is no formal students' union.

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 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 panel found the quality of the student academic experience is typically outstanding for the provider's mix of students and courses.

Across the student experience aspect, the provider embeds effective approaches and tailors its approaches to its students to provide a consistent and excellent student experience. The panel found that:

- most features are outstanding, and two of the features are very high quality (but also include some elements that were outstanding)
- though there is insufficient evidence that staff professional development and academic practice is a very high quality or outstanding quality feature, the panel did not find any features to be of concern.

The panel judged that the evidence indicates that the aspect is typically outstanding and 'best fits' with the description 'most features are outstanding for all groups of students and courses'.

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

Teaching, assessment, and feedback

The panel considered teaching, assessment and feedback to be an outstanding quality feature.

The indicators provide strong initial evidence of outstanding quality 'teaching on my course' for full-time students (including students from underrepresented groups) and of very high or outstanding quality 'assessment and feedback' for full-time students.

The provider and student submissions give evidence of outstanding features, including:

- high contact hours (30-40 per week), small group and one-to-one tuition to support individual student learning
- transformative and highly practical training in preparation for professional careers
- high staff to student ratio delivering personalised support and feedback.

Students also highly value the personalised approach and one-to-one learning opportunities.

Overall, the panel concluded 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.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The panel considered this an outstanding quality feature, based on evidence in the provider and student submissions. The panel considered the characteristics of the student body, and the high

numbers of students from underrepresented groups, to be relevant when considering this evidence.

Evidence of outstanding quality includes:

- relevant and current courses that span the breadth of skills required in the profession
- a rigorous curriculum, which enables students to be stretched, embedded in professional practice
- an emphasis on the interrelatedness of skills through integrated project and public production opportunities for students.

The panel found that the provider submission sets out a coherent and effective approach, which leads to consistently excellent student experience of course content and delivery, and student engagement in learning and stretch. It concluded that course content and delivery inspire the provider's students to actively engage in and commit to their learning, and stretch students to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

The panel considered this an outstanding quality feature, based on evidence in the provider and student submissions.

The provider submission states that course content is industry focussed, and teachers are highly experienced professional practitioners in their fields. The provider has effective approaches in place to ensure students directly benefit from staff professional practice and employer engagement activities.

Further evidence of outstanding quality includes:

- extensive employer and industry engagement processes, e.g. mock auditions with leading companies and directors. The provider proactively seeks and responds to industry advice, for example around intimacy protocols, working with leading practitioners to implement current guidance
- the provider supports students to take part in competitions, and consistently ranks among winners and finalists
- industry partners support delivery through in-kind training partnerships, scholarships, mentoring, including business mentoring.

In the view of the panel, the provider submission sets out a coherent and effective approach and uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to an outstanding academic experience for its students.

Staff professional development and academic practice

The panel considered there is not enough evidence that this is a very high quality or outstanding quality feature.

Approaches to staff professional development and academic practice are described in the provider submission. This includes:

- staff development sessions are predominantly focused on student support. Limited information is provided about how this provision focuses on higher education teaching methods and practices
- Higher Education Academy fellowship (FHEA) numbers are comparatively low, indicating that this is an emerging feature for the provider
- it was not clear how many staff took part in external opportunities such as conferences, nor how they consistently contributed to creating a culture of learning and teaching enhancement
- some evidence of a community of practice and peer observation. However the information about whether this is formally embedded, and whether all staff take part, was limited.

The panel found that whilst there is evidence that emergent approaches for staff professional development and academic practice that support students' experience are being developed by the provider, excellent academic practice is not yet consistently promoted or widely embedded. Therefore, the panel concluded that there is not enough evidence to demonstrate a very high quality feature.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The panel interpreted the full-time 'academic support' indicator to be initial evidence of a very high or outstanding quality feature. It noted a significant dip below benchmark in Year 4 in the time series. The provider attributes this to coronavirus and to the loss of some key staff, which has now been corrected.

The provider and student submissions include the following evidence of an outstanding quality feature:

- support is highly tailored to the needs of the students, and to the requirements of each production the students take part in
- over 75 per cent of the student body is engaged with the Student Wellbeing service
- high student to staff ratio, high contact hours, and small cohort size
- the Student and Academic Services team provides outstanding academic and pastoral care. This underpins teaching provision and creates an environment of care and wellbeing.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel considered the evidence to demonstrate that the provider ensures a supportive learning environment, and its students have access to a wide and readily available range of outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs.

Learning resources

The panel considered learning resources a very high quality feature.

The panel interpreted the full-time learning resources indicator to provide some initial evidence of a very high quality feature.

Provider and student submissions include the following evidence of a very high quality feature:

- specialist and industry-standard facilities and course-related resources
- industry partnerships to secure access to the latest state-of-the-art technology for its students
- significant investment in access to specialist digital resources.

The student submission contains evidence of recent improvements to learning resources alongside some disquiet with digital technology.

The panel considered that physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning across the provider.

Student engagement in improvement

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

The panel interpreted the full-time 'student voice' indicator to provide some initial evidence of a very high quality feature.

The provider and student submissions include the following evidence of a very high quality feature:

- effective formal and informal student communications and representation at all levels of governance
- student driven initiatives such as the response to the Black Lives Matter.

The provider submission attributes a recent dip in the indicator for Year 4 to unexpected staff absences. The provider asserts that recent feedback has been more positive, which is supported by positive quotes regarding student voice in the student submission. The student submission also contains evidence of the positive impact of the representative systems and the ability to feedback informally at any time.

The panel considered that the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students.

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.

The panel found that student outcomes are typically outstanding for the provider's mix of students and courses.

Across the student outcomes aspect, the panel found:

- most features are outstanding quality, with approaches to supporting student success that the panel considered 'sector leading'
- one very high quality feature
- the outstanding and very high quality features apply to all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups which make up a high number of the provider's students.

The panel applied the criteria and considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Gold'. This is because most features are outstanding quality for all groups of students and courses.

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 describes extensive tailored support during studies, including a very positive staff to student ratio. The provider submission also includes evidence of:

- close attendance monitoring and student wellbeing support, delivering bespoke, tailored approaches for some groups of students
- an Industry Liaison Manager role, who supports for students to gain agent representation during their final year of study
- placements with high profile theatre and companies, and in-house projects, public performances and productions
- free or low-cost professional development activities for graduates, as well as performance opportunities for recent graduates.

Additional evidence provided shows a strong number of graduates with confirmed professional acting work and agent representation. Multiple quotes from students suggest that the provider's support approaches are effective.

The panel considered that the provider has outstanding practices in place for student support and academic enhancement and demonstrates a sector leading level of support and service.

Overall, the panel consider there is enough evidence to suggest that the provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel examined the evidence in the indicators and considered continuation and completion rates to be an outstanding quality feature.

The indicators provide evidence of outstanding continuation and completion rates for full-time students.

The panel considered the characteristics of the student body and the high numbers of students from underrepresented groups to be relevant when considering this evidence.

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

Progression rates

The panel considered progression rates to be a very high quality feature, based on the provider submission and the indicators.

The indicators provide evidence that, for full-time students, progression rates are not very high quality. The panel notes the following factors for context:

- graduate outcomes have been disproportionately negatively affected by coronavirus and lockdowns, during which performing arts venues were closed for significant periods
- the two-year Foundation degree structure means that Foundation degree graduates are invited to complete the Graduate Outcomes Survey only three months after completing their top-up year. This means they have less time available to transition into their career.

The provider highlights several interventions now in place to support students transition into employment, which the panel considered to be far-reaching.

The panel placed considerable weight on the context described in the provider submission, particularly the timing of the Graduate Outcomes Survey for students studying on a two- plus one-year course. The panel also placed more weight on the interventions and initiatives developed and implemented to support employability and professional transitions. Considering the evidence in the round, the panel considered that there are outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

Intended educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature, based on evidence including:

- aims and outcomes are clearly articulated in course documents
- students can gain a practical understanding of working practices and standards through project and production work
- embodied learning and physical and technical skills are simultaneously honed and reflected upon, so that students become aware of their own educational gains
- high levels of contact hours and student to staff ratios help students understand what is expected from them

- professional development strands are embedded within the curriculum and further supported by a buddy mentoring scheme.

Overall, the panel concluded 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.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission evidences that small group and one-to-one tuition and tutorials, as well as intensive project and production work, prepares students effectively for achieving the intended educational gains.

Further evidence includes:

- high levels of alumni and industry engagement, notably centred in a newly created Industry Liaison Manager role, enables the provider to closely monitor graduates' experiences
- programmes are structured in a way that levels the playing field for students from a variety of backgrounds. Tailored small group and one-to-one teaching supports each student to reach their full potential
- extensive tailoring of support helps students achieve their intended gains via small group and one-to-one teaching
- the high level of disabled students has led to bespoke interventions to remove barriers to engagement.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider's approaches to supporting its students to achieve these gains are evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to its students and their different starting points.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider plans to start using a reflective questionnaire, issued termly, to support students' reflective practice, track how they rate their confidence and quantify educational gains. Planned actions to further measure and evaluate educational gains include:

- monitoring feedback from placement providers
- reporting in greater detail on the Graduate Outcomes Survey
- monitoring graduate employment outcomes through and annual graduate survey and the work of the Industry Liaison Manager
- gathering feedback from the Training Committee, which includes high profile alumni.

While these evaluation measurements have not yet been implemented, the panel considered that the plans demonstrate proactive and far-reaching engagement with the topic of educational gains and are highly relevant to the specialist nature of its provision.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider evaluates the gains made by its students, and demonstrates its students are succeeding in achieving the intended gains.

Overall: Gold

The panel considered the overall 'best fit' rating to be 'Gold', based on the student outcomes and student experience aspect ratings.

The panel weighted student experience and student outcomes equally, and considered all the evidence across all features and all the provider's student groups, subjects and courses to come to a 'best fit' decision regarding the overall rating for the provider.

The panel found most student experience features and most student outcomes features to be of outstanding quality for all groups of students, and that the outstanding and very high quality features apply to all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups which make up a high proportion of the provider's students.