



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

Cornwall College

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at Cornwall College 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 that effectively encourage students to engage in their learning, and stretch them to develop their knowledge and skills
- research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement is used to contribute to a very high quality academic experience
- support for staff professional development, and promotion of excellent academic practice
- physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively.

Student outcomes: Silver

Student outcomes are typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- effective support for students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses
- very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses
- the provider articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students.

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 Cornwall College Group is the result of a number of mergers of further education institutions in the Devon and Cornwall area. It is made up of 10 campuses spread throughout the two counties.

The provider has a clear employability focus and describes itself as 'The Career College'. Its mission is, 'providing exceptional education and training for every learner to improve their career prospects'. It claims its higher education provision 'produces work-ready graduates, who are well-equipped to solve local and global challenge'.

In 2020 – 21, its higher education provision included about 800 full-time and 300 part-time students, plus around 170 apprentices studying at Level 4 or above.

The main subjects delivered are in the areas of Agriculture, Business and Education.

Just over half of full-time higher education students are mature, with 45.7 per cent under 21. Only five per cent of its part-time students are under 21.

Around half of students are from the local area, the rest are from across the UK. Almost all students are white. Almost a third of full-time students have a declared disability, and over 60 per cent are female.

Eight of the 17 neighbourhoods with the highest levels of deprivation in Cornwall are found within the provider's catchment area. The provider serves several areas of significant deprivation.

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: 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 experience to be typically very high quality for the provider's mix of students and courses.

Across the student experience aspect, the panel found:

- five features are very high quality
- there was insufficient evidence to rate two features as very high quality, although the panel did not consider these features to be matters of concern.

Considering the evidence holistically, the panel considered there is evidence of typically very high quality. The panel applied the criteria and considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Silver'. This is because most features of the aspect are very high quality for all groups of students.

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

Teaching, assessment, and feedback

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

The overall indicator for 'teaching on my course' provides evidence of between very high quality and not very high quality for full-time students.

The overall indicator for 'assessment and feedback' provides evidence of not very high quality for full-time students. The most recent year shows a sharp drop in satisfaction with assessment and feedback.

The provider acknowledges that particular subject areas impact their indicators for teaching, and notes this representation is one-third of the contribution to the overall indicator. There is extensive description of actions taken in the provider submission, and the provider asserts that teaching is currently very high quality.

This is supported by evidence from independently conducted internal surveys. While the scope of the survey quoted was narrow and did not cover the whole of this feature, the panel accepted it as evidence that the published data does not reflect more recent student experience in this area.

The student submission is broadly supportive of the provider view. It states that 'the variety of assessment modes, and the alignment of the assessment mode according to context, is appreciated by students as it allows us to highlight our strengths and exercise weaker areas'.

The panel noted that students find written feedback from assignment submissions to be thorough and have a good balance of encouragement and critique. Feedback is often focussed and clear on the relevance to wider contexts and professional practice. Students also find oral feedback from lecturers useful.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment, and that this is a very high quality feature.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

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

The provider submission shows that industry is fully integrated into its higher education teaching practice. The panel noted that employers are engaged from course inception through design, validation and teaching. The teaching approach has a clear industry focus, which is achieved through innovative curriculum design that puts real-world problems at the heart of delivery.

Examples in the provider submission include:

- supportive small class sizes in industry-aligned spaces
- industry-linked workshops and talks from subject experts, encouraging contextualised debates and interventions into both practical and theoretical ways of thinking
- industry leaders directly influencing learning delivery through guest lectures, associate teaching and via their role as critical partners in curriculum design.

This provider operates a multi-modal assessment strategy that includes authentic assessment across programmes. This creates embedded links to industry, adds value to the experiential nature of the learning experience and positively promotes student motivation and educational gain.

The panel noted that the student submission supports the 'active classroom learning' style of teaching, and shows that students find the enthusiasm of lecturers 'infectious' and their breadth of knowledge 'inspiring'. The industry experience of lecturers is seen as a huge asset to the delivery of the curriculum, which is considered well-balanced. Students find it engaging and stretching.

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

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

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

The provider submission contains a detailed discussion of staff research and teaching practice, and evidence of employer input into the curriculum. The panel noted clear links with industry through employer advisory boards and research.

A number of examples are given, including:

- research projects within Newquay Zoo, with staff tutoring students' independent research projects

- collaboration with DEFRA, other agencies and leading participants in the research and development of new sustainable agricultural methods; enabling students to experience new agricultural and land management technologies
- art and design lecturers being funded to complete Masters' studies in Contemporary Art and Photography critical thinking, immersing staff in their specialism.

The panel noted several examples of students making important and original contributions to knowledge via publications and public engagement.

The discussion of this feature in the provider submission is supported by the student submission and the panel considered it to be clearly appreciated by students.

The panel concluded that the provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for its students, and that overall this is a very high quality feature.

Staff professional development and academic practice

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

The provider submission describes its approach to staff professional development, and to the monitoring and enhancement of the quality of teaching and the maintenance of subject currency.

Evidence includes:

- quality assurance procedures for sharing best practice and guidance with all academic and teaching support staff
- the teaching, learning and assessment team leads a robust lesson observation process, in which all higher education staff receive at least one observation per academic year
- staff are required to achieve a teaching qualification within three years of starting employment. All new staff are given a coach from the teaching, learning and assessment team to support them
- professional development opportunities for staff, including funding for research and scholarly activity supporting own areas of subject interest.

Overall, the panel considered this a well-balanced approach to staff development. There is very high quality support for staff professional development, and excellent academic practice is promoted. This is a very high quality feature.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel considered that there was insufficient evidence to consider this to be a very high quality feature.

The indicator for overall 'academic support' provided very strong initial evidence that this feature was not very high quality for full-time students.

The provider submission describes its student support activities, including:

- flexible timetabling and creative curriculum models that have enabled many students to engage in degree-level studies
- each student has an 'individual learning plan' which is bespoke to them and highlights any additional learning needs
- students have access to partner institutions' electronic collections, as well as full membership to those universities' libraries
- students with additional learning needs can access further support from the in-house specialist learning support tutors.

The panel noted that the student submission states that there is good student support, but this does not align with the data, which indicates a low level of student satisfaction.

Overall, the panel found insufficient evidence of the effectiveness of these actions to counter the statistical evidence. It concluded that there was insufficient evidence that this is a very high quality feature.

Learning resources

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

The overall 'learning resources' indicator for full-time students provided strong initial evidence that this feature was not very high quality. However, the provider states that the indicators relating to learning resources are not reflective of its students' actual experience of higher education. It provides independently verified results of its 2020 Induction Survey in which 91.1 per cent of higher education students said that using the provider's IT network and software helped their studies. The following year 88.2 per cent of higher education students agreed, or strongly agreed, that they have access to resources they need to be successful on their course. The results from the most recent survey are higher at 91.5 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing.

The provider submission gives extensive information about the resources available to students and investments made. These include:

- investment in the Camborne campus in 2021, providing ceramics, 3D room and studio space, with alumni working in the space to provide guidance and support
- 'Substance Suite' software and major software upgrades
- welding suites for engineering students.

The provider submission also describes studies taking place in surf schools, a multi-million pound agricultural research facility future farm, research boats off the Cornish coast, superyachts and equine arenas. The student submission states that students feel lecturing and support staff are invested in their future success.

Overall, the panel considers this feature to be very high quality, and that physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel found that there was insufficient evidence to consider this to be a very high quality feature.

The 'student voice' indicator provides compelling initial evidence that the feature is not very high quality for full-time students. The provider quotes credible, independently collected internal data regarding student voice that is substantially more positive, with 86 per cent of higher education students agreeing or strongly agreeing that they have opportunities to give feedback and feel listened to. The panel noted, however, that this survey was conducted shortly after induction and may be only partially representative of students' views.

The provider submission states that, 'student feedback is not only highly valued by staff members but frequently actioned'. There is evidence of this in the fact that students have used available forums to change policies and practice that impact upon all higher education students. This has included, but is not limited to:

- the sustainability of materials used in both classrooms and social spaces
- social spaces themselves, through updated decor and furniture
- the timing of teaching activities, opening times, and access to laboratories and libraries.

The panel noted that data collected on the quality of teaching and feedback is acted on swiftly and effectively, and the impact is measured through the quality cycle.

In spite of this, the panel considered that, overall, there is insufficient evidence to judge this feature very high quality.

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:

- four features to be very high quality
- insufficient evidence to judge two features to be very high quality
- none of the features are clearly below the level of very high quality or 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 as 'all features are very high quality for most 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 a very high quality feature.

The provider describes itself as producing 'work-ready' graduates, and evidences this with examples such as fieldtrips, presentations and work-based learning. Further evidence of the providers' approach to ensuring its students succeed and progress beyond studies includes:

- careers advisers providing independent guidance to students
- evident awareness of its mix of students, with early intervention programmes based on attendance and engagement
- an understanding of students' entry points with individual learning plans, bespoke to students and highlighting learning needs.

The panel noted that around half of students are from deprived areas, and roughly a third are mature students, comprised of people who historically are less likely to participate in higher education. The panel considered whether the provider's approaches to supporting student success were appropriate in this context, concluding that they are.

Overall, the panel judged that the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies, and that this feature is very high quality.

Continuation and completion rates

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

The overall 'continuation' indicator gives strong initial evidence of an outstanding feature for full time students, although performance is declining somewhat over time.

The overall 'completion' indicator gives very strong initial evidence of a very high quality feature.

The panel noted that the provider submission gives a good narrative around continuation and completion and demonstrates awareness of its mix of students and how it supports them to achieve.

Considering the evidence as a whole, the panel judged this feature to be very high quality. There are very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

Progression rates

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

The overall 'progression' indicator gives initial evidence that this feature is not very high quality. However, the provider notes in its submission that progression is an area of focus and discusses the local context of its student demographic profile, with fewer graduate jobs available in the local area. It argues that its low progression rates are a result of the way the graduate outcomes survey categorises roles, its intake profile and the local employment market.

The panel accepted the provider's mitigations and placed weight on the provider's local context. Overall, the panel concluded that there are very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses, and that this is a very high quality feature.

Intended educational gains

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

The provider submission gives a clear statement of intended educational gain, appropriate to provider's marketplace.

The provider submission evidences:

- a theory of change approach to track student progress on the development of work-based skills and employability, with project learning as a philosophy
- strategic and operational activities that engender the positive development skills and employability gain, with an intention to develop well-rounded individuals
- the signposting of students to value-added activities across the group, including subject specific industry recognised qualifications
- implementation of numerical data and qualitative data for context, and intelligence on the gains that students make to enhance employability.

The panel found sufficient evidence that the provider articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students. It therefore concluded that there is sufficient evidence of a very high quality feature.

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

The panel found insufficient evidence to judge these features as very high quality, as the features are not directly addressed within the provider submission. However, the provider's approaches to and evaluation of gains are implicit in its submission as a whole.

The panel found sufficient evidence to be assured that these features are not clearly below the level of very high quality, or of concern, but could not find sufficient evidence to judge them very high quality.

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.

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