



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

LTE Group

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at the LTE Group 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:

- highly effective teaching, assessment, and feedback practices that support students' learning progression and attainment are embedded across the provider
- professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for its students
- very high quality support for staff professional development and promotion of excellent academic practice
- a supportive learning environment, and students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support
- effective engagement with students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students.

Student outcomes: Bronze

Student outcomes are typically high quality, and there are some very high quality features.

Very high quality features include:

- effective support for students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- the educational gains the provider intends for its students are well explained, including why these are relevant to its students
- students are effectively supported to achieve the intended educational gains
- the panel also identified that continuation for the provider's students is very high quality.

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

LTE Group (Learning, Training and Employment) has a mission 'to deliver first-class technical and professional higher-level skills to meet the priorities of the Greater Manchester region and beyond.' It has a high proportion of 'non-traditional' higher education students and states a commitment to widening access to students 'who would not normally progress into higher education'.

The student mix is made up of full-time undergraduates, part-time undergraduates and part-time postgraduates. There has been a decline in full-time student numbers from 2,310 in 2017-18 to 1,450 in 2020-21, but a growth in part-time numbers (980 to 1,710), which the provider attributes to a change in delivery model and eligibility of provision. The provider validates their provision with three university partners and delivers Pearson level 4 and 5 qualifications.

In 2020-21, just over 20 per cent of full-time students and just over 15 per cent of part-time undergraduates entered with A-levels.

Most undergraduates are female, and around a third report a disability (though this is considerably less for part-time undergraduates and postgraduates).

Around 40 per cent of full-time undergraduates study Performing Arts. The other largest subjects are Business and Management and Creative Arts and Design. For part-time undergraduates, almost 50 per cent study Business and Management and a quarter study Law.

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 weighed up all the evidence which related to the student experience aspect as a whole and determined the student experience aspect to be 'Silver'.

The panel found:

- five features were very high quality
- two features where there was insufficient evidence of very high quality
- no features of concern
- evidence of typically very high quality across the aspect as a whole
- the very high quality features apply to all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups – which represent a high proportion of the provider's students.

The panel considered the best fit rating to be 'Silver' because most features of the aspect are very high quality for all groups of students. The panel did not think that 'Bronze' would be the best fit because the evidence demonstrates that 'most' rather than 'some' of the student experience features are of very high quality.

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 indicators for 'teaching on my course' provide limited evidence of very high quality provision for full-time students.

The indicator for 'assessment and feedback' shows initial evidence of very high quality provision for full-time students.

Despite a substantial part-time population, very few appear to be eligible for the national student survey, so the panel was unable to place evidential weight on part-time student cohorts.

The provider and student submissions provide further evidence of a very high quality feature. For example:

- the provider submission notes that the lower ratings are due to the move to online delivery during lockdown, particularly as around 75 per cent of their students were on 'very practical' courses

- the provider submission details several comments from external examiners which support teaching, learning and assessment improvements – these appear to be widely spread across the provision
- there are quotes in both the student and provider submissions that refer to ‘amazing tutors’ and the support and encouragement they provide. However, the student submission did also indicate some concerns
- external examiner reports recognise ‘clear in-depth constructive feedback’ and ‘variety in assessment that appropriately challenges the students’
- the student submission notes that small class sizes allow for peer-to-peer assessment which benefitted the students
- the provider has included a statement from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education that ‘the provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes’.

Overall, the panel concluded there was evidence that highly effective teaching, assessment, and feedback practices that support students’ learning progression and attainment are embedded across the provider.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

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

The provider submission provides a brief overview of the curriculum development process which involved employer partners and gave several examples. However, the evidence for this feature relied almost entirely on this side of course development and very little detail was provided around other aspects of curriculum content and development.

The provider submission notes that it evaluates its provision to see where students are lacking engagement. In Engineering, the different profiles of students were considered, as well as students demanding more challenge from their courses. From this, the department has diversified provisions including interactive activities, more opportunities to catch up or recap and further research opportunities. Engagement and achievement have improved in this area as a result, but this is a limited example and did not convince the panel that this was available to most or all students.

The panel thought that the student submission gave limited evidence to support this feature.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

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

The provider is not a research institution and as such ‘research’ is not included in the panel’s consideration of this provider for this feature.

Evidence for this feature includes:

- the provider submission notes that its curriculum is comprised of vocational courses from levels 4 to 7, and that engagement with employers is central to the academic provision
- the provider submission gives evidence of programmes where employers are engaged in curriculum enrichment
- comments from multiple programmes are provided to support activity
- industry is effectively used to enhance the curriculum.

Taking the evidence into consideration, the panel concluded that the provider uses professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for its students.

Staff professional development and academic practice

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

The provider submission included the following evidence:

- an overview of a research community of tutors and an annual review of the continuing professional development programme
- staff being supported to become Advance HE fellows and to get further qualifications
- details of virtual classrooms contributing to staff professional development, including significant investment in upskilling both staff and students during the coronavirus pandemic
- the creation of 20 communities of practice (that appear to be widespread across the provision) to develop the academic community and improve the student experience
- students' union awards demonstrate appreciation of staff.

Overall, the panel considered that the evidence indicates very high quality support for staff professional development and promotion of excellent academic practice.

Learning environment and academic support

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

The 'academic support' indicator provides initial evidence of very high quality provision for full-time students, though there is evidence that academic support is below the level of very high quality for some groups of students. The panel did not consider this to be addressed in the provider submission.

The panel noted that this should not be determinative that this feature is 'not very high quality'. In this case, the panel considered the evidence in the provider submission to be important to its assessment of the indicator evidence and features.

The provider asserts it provides tailored individual academic support and provides evidence for this, which includes:

- action taken during the coronavirus lockdown to support students with the continuation of studies, such as laptop loans, financial support and care packages, leading to a student support award in 2021
- outreach work to encourage progression into higher education
- comments from students about the support they have received – it is unknown if these are restricted to limited provision, or across the board
- course specific support strategies
- reports that identify ‘exceptional sense of community and attention given to the student experience and pastoral care’
- the Uni Connect partnership programmes allow students from deprived areas to engage with higher education provision.

The student submission provides positive evidence around levels of support provided to students, particularly during the period of coronavirus lockdown, both in terms of academic and wellbeing support. Overall, the panel considered there is evidence that the provider fosters a supportive learning environment, and that its students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support.

Learning resources

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

The indicator for ‘learning resources’ provides initial evidence of performance below the level of very high quality for full-time students, and there is no data available for part-time students. In this case, the panel considered the evidence in the provider submission to be important to the panel’s assessment of the indicator evidence and features.

The provider submission acknowledges that this feature presents an issue, and it identifies recent investment in a new shared college campus and for digital provision. It also provides a list of additional resources which have been provided to students in the past two years as evidence of strategies to improve the data.

However, no detail of impact is contained within the provider submission and the student submission does not address this in detail, adding limited evidence to support this feature.

Overall, therefore, the panel concluded that there is not enough evidence that the provider effectively uses physical and virtual learning resources to support very high quality teaching and learning.

Student engagement in improvement

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

The panel found that the indicator for ‘student voice’ offers initial evidence of a very high quality feature for full-time students.

There is a decline in some indicators in the TEF period, but the provider submission suggests that this can be attributed to the coronavirus pandemic (for years 3 and 4). Taking this into consideration, the panel interpreted the student engagement indicator to provide compelling evidence of very high quality for full-time students.

The provider submission gives additional evidence. This includes:

- a systematic approach to student voice, with 'clear and robust' plans for improving into the future
- examples of significant changes to student experience made based on student feedback, indicating very high quality levels of responsiveness to student voice
- examples have been given that show the provider listens and takes action on student feedback
- student feedback is taken through a staff appreciation day at the student union, with strong evidence that individual staff go the extra mile to support their students and provide motivating sessions and helpful advice.

The panel did consider that there was some evidence of outstanding elements in this feature with the provider embedding actions for improvement. However, considering the evidence overall, the panel considered this to be a very high quality feature and found that the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students.

Student outcomes: Bronze

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 weighed up all the evidence as a whole and determined the student outcomes aspect to be 'Bronze'.

It found:

- three very high quality features
- one feature where there was not enough evidence of very high quality
- one feature which it treated neutrally
- that the provider's performance for 'continuation' and 'completion' was mixed
- no features of concern.

The panel considered the evidence in the provider submission to be important to its assessment of the indicator evidence and features, such as contextual evidence relating to the entry qualifications of the provider's students (such as non A-level). The panel also considered the provider's recently merged status and the limitations on the TEF time series data that this had.

The panel considered the best fit outcome to be 'Bronze' because it found evidence that some of the features of the aspect are very high quality for most groups of students.

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 details course specific support strategies showing a differentiated approach based on sector need and cohort profile.

The provider describes academic support that it believes impacts its continuation, completion and progression rates. It has adapted its processes to analyse the experience of higher education students more directly.

As it has such a high proportion of students without A-levels, the provider judges on distance travelled. The curriculum itself is vocational and developed to provide employability skills. There is a personal tutor system to formally work with individual students throughout their studies and identify those at risk. Support has been brought together into a single point of contact, with support in careers, academic support, library services, the student union, health and wellbeing and progression.

The student submission commends the level of employability-related and 'industry ready' material within courses. It also makes several references to students feeling supported to achieve their study and career aspirations.

The panel considered that the provider and student submissions include evidence about the effectiveness of the support for students to progress successfully beyond their studies. However, there was insufficient evidence for it to conclude that the provider deploys and tailors its approaches. The panel considered that the evidence demonstrates a very high quality feature.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel considered there is evidence of very high quality regarding the provider's continuation rates, but not enough evidence that its completion rates are very high quality.

The 'continuation' indicator provides initial compelling evidence of very high quality for full-time students, and the panel noted in the split indicators that there is evidence that the provider's performance is below the level of very high quality for year 2, and outstanding quality in years 3 and 4. The 'continuation' indicator provides evidence of outstanding quality for part-time students.

The 'completion' indicator shows initial evidence of provision below the level of very high quality for both full-time and part-time students.

In its assessment, the panel considered mitigations offered by the provider regarding its continuation and completion rates, which were impacted by poor outcomes for one cohort of students within an operating division which is no longer part of the LTE Group. The panel also considered the relevant guidance in its assessment – that its judgement is for the full TEF period.

The provider submission offered some examples of its approaches to completion and continuation which include:

- the provider has adjusted study skills and academic support to address the needs of students post-lockdown
- the introduction of additional academic skills sessions for specific courses with high numbers of students for whom English is a second language, and with non-traditional entry qualifications. The provider gives evidence that these have had an impact on 'achievement'
- a summer school designed to support health and social care students returning to education after a long break
- reference to internal data, which suggests that continuation rates have been improving over a four-year period
- for completion data, there are also references to internal data, suggesting that there was a negative impact from professional courses on the data sets and that also a lowering of academic skills from students impacted by lockdown.

Considering the indicator and submission evidence in the round, the panel concluded there is sufficient evidence of very high quality with regard to continuation but that there is insufficient evidence of very high quality with regard to completion.

Progression rates

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

The 'progression' indicator provides initial evidence of provision below the level of very high quality for full-time students, and for part-time students, but with less certainty in the data. The panel considered that the evidence is very strong overall and therefore the initial evidence does not support a judgement that this is a very high quality feature.

The provider submission offered examples of evidence relating to progression which included:

- the timing of the graduate outcomes survey for providers with 'top-up' provision
- low participation rates in the graduate outcomes survey
- prevalence of part time work for portfolio building students in specific sectors
- the overall cohort 'make-up' – meaning that many students are excluded from the graduate outcomes survey

- it has commissioned an independent survey of its alumni and claims that around 74 per cent report a positive outcome. However, the submission does not provide a description of the denominator, sample, participation, or range of students, or the definition of positive outcomes operating in this survey, so it is not possible to evaluate the strength of this evidence.

The panel considered that the 'progression' indicator did not provide evidence of a very high quality feature and that the provider submission provided only limited evidence in support of its work on progression. Therefore, overall the panel concluded that there are not very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

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

The panel considered all features relating to educational gains together. Noting the guidance, the panel considered 'evaluation and demonstration of educational gains' neutrally, because an absence of developed measures of educational gains should not prevent a provider from being awarded a higher TEF rating.

The panel found sufficient evidence of very high quality for intended educational gains, and the provider's approaches to supporting educational gains.

The provider articulates educational gains as distance travelled and the development of wider/employability skills, and explains their relevance to its students as it has a high proportion of non-traditional entrants and a largely vocational curriculum. The provider measures distance travelled through the achievement of high grades and qualifications and offers evidence of this in its submission.

The panel noted how the provider implements support for students to acquire wider/employability skills, some of which are set out under 'learning environment and academic support' and 'approaches to supporting student success'. Further examples include:

- some 'differentiated support and teaching strategies', which reflect the various starting points of the students
- students in creative and performance industries are encouraged to develop resilience through industry partner projects, along with understanding industry expectations
- the creation of a module for all level 4 students to increase the development of 'scholarly and professional skills'.

The provider submission notes that there is no current single evaluation methodology in place for educational gains, but that they are in the process of developing more measures.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel found these features to be very high quality, with 'evaluation and demonstration of educational gains' to be considered neutrally in its assessment.

Overall: Silver

Applying the guidance and the panel members' expert judgement, the panel considered the overall 'best fit' rating to be 'Silver'.

The panel considered the student experience aspect rating to be 'Silver' and the student outcomes aspect rating to be 'Bronze'. The panel weighed 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.

The panel found most student experience features to be of very high quality for all groups of students and courses, and for student outcomes, some features of the aspect are very high quality for most groups of students.

In determining the overall rating, the panel considered the evidence across all the features and judged the evidence to show that, on the whole, the student experience and student outcomes are typically of very high quality.