



# **Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023**

## **Summary TEF 2023 panel statement**

**University for the Creative Arts**

# Summary of outcomes

## Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at University for the Creative Arts 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, assessment and feedback practices are effective in supporting students' learning, progression and attainment
- course content and delivery effectively encourage students to engage in their learning, and students are stretched to develop their knowledge and skills
- the provider uses scholarship, professional practice, and engagement with external professional networks to contribute to a very high quality academic experience
- the provider fosters a supportive learning environment in which students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support
- physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning
- the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements in their experiences and outcomes.

There is also one outstanding quality feature:

- outstanding support for staff development, and excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider.

### Student outcomes: Silver

Student outcomes are typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- the provider's approaches are effective and supportive to enable its students to succeed in their studies
- there are very high rates of continuation and completion for most of the provider's courses and groups of students
- there are very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses
- the provider effectively supports its students to achieve defined educational gains
- the provider evaluates the gains made by its students.

There is also one outstanding quality feature:

- 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.

# 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 for the Creative Arts (UCA) is a small institution based over four UK campuses, providing specialist education for the creative industries for around 5,000 full-time, UK-based students studying on more than 50 campus-based undergraduate courses each year.

Its educational mission is to prepare graduates for long-term careers in the creative industries, in a strategy 'geared towards inclusive, and personalised, creative education across all courses, levels, and campuses'. There is an emphasis on supporting and delivering success for underrepresented student groups, and providing a student experience that is 'globally inclusive'.

Over the four-year TEF period the provider had 18,750 full-time undergraduate students, 6,640 part-time undergraduate students, and 2,670 students studying overseas.

For the duration of the TEF period, UCA had a strategic partnership with the Open College of the Arts (OCA). UCA made a decision to end this partnership in August 2023. Part-time students reflected in UCA data studied at OCA.

Most undergraduates study creative arts and design subjects, with the next largest proportion of students studying business and management, English studies, performing arts, and architecture, building and planning. Business and management grew significantly as a proportion of full-time undergraduates during the TEF period.

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/](http://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/](http://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 in the indicators and the submissions relating to the student experience aspect as a whole and determined the student experience aspect rating to be 'Silver'.

The panel found:

- most features to be very high quality
- one feature was outstanding
- that the very high quality and outstanding features apply to all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups.

The panel noted significant differences in the evidence between full-time and part-time students' experiences. The panel carefully considered the context, in that it is no longer responsible for part-time OCA provision (which represents approximately 10 per cent of the student body) and that the provider's contribution to its own benchmark was high, and weighted the evidence accordingly throughout its assessment.

The panel considered the 'best fit' rating to be 'Silver' because the evidence best fits the description that 'all features of the aspect are very high quality for most groups of students'.

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

### **Teaching, assessment, and feedback**

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The indicator for 'teaching on my course' shows initial evidence of very high quality for full-time students. For part-time students, though, the indicator gives some evidence of very high quality but there is limited certainty in the data.

The indicator for 'assessment and feedback' provides initial evidence of outstanding quality for full-time students, and the indicator for part-time students gives some evidence of very high quality but there is limited certainty in the data.

The indicators suggest that the evidence applies to most of the provider's groups of students.

The provider submission describes a particular approach to studio-based teaching, involving high contact hours and collaborative working. The evidence includes:

- students on all courses work collaboratively on 'live briefs' so they can apply their learning towards creative professional practice
- positive external examiner feedback across all undergraduate courses, as well as positive comments on alignment with industry and professional experience

- reference to internal surveys showing that an average of 82 per cent of students agree that 'marking and assessment has been fair' and 'I have received helpful comments on my work'
- clear guidance principles for delivery.

The student submission states that teaching quality remains a priority and how teaching and course content is the area where undergraduate students were most satisfied.

The panel identified some areas of outstanding provision, but not for all student groups, so the panel could not assess this feature as outstanding. Overall the panel found evidence to demonstrate a very high quality feature, and concluded that the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, assessment and feedback practices that are effective in supporting students' learning, progression and attainment.

### **Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch**

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The provider submission presents evidence of educational research and design, along with how diverse course content is related to inspiring student learning, such as through connections to professional practice and industry.

Specifically, the provider submission describes an approach to course design that is collaborative, requiring input from teaching teams, and personalised towards students' career goals and interests, with a focus on live briefs.

Evidence in the provider and student submissions includes:

- description of educational design delivery shown to deepen knowledge and skills, and to build student learning challenge
- interleaving of different topics, to improve performance and support individual tailoring
- varied practice, to improve haptic skills and confidence; and deliberate practice, to address areas of weakness and to develop expertise
- evidence from student feedback in its strategic consultation survey that 64 per cent of students found this approach to be effective
- the provider submission uses evidence from the survey to present referenced feedback where students used 'strong' and 'positive' adjectives to describe their courses.

The panel also found evidence of effective 'stretch' in the student submission, where pulse survey results indicate positive responses across range of improving skills.

Overall, the panel considered that elements of practice are outstanding, but the panel could not find evidence that this related to all groups of students and courses. The panel concluded that course content and delivery is effective in encouraging the provider's students to engage in their learning, and to provide students with 'stretch' to develop their knowledge and skills, consistent with a very high quality feature.

## **Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement**

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

Evidence in the provider submission describes the importance it places on research informing the academic experience for its students. It describes a vibrant research culture.

Additional evidence in the provider submission includes:

- all permanent academic staff are contracted to undertake research, scholarly activity and teaching and learning development
- systematic engagement with employers and working professionals is part of course design and approval
- 20 per cent of teaching delivered by staff who are working practitioners in their relevant industry
- systematic engagement with employers and working professionals as a compulsory part of course design, development and approval.

Overall the panel considered that the provider uses scholarship, professional practice, and engagement with employers and external professional networks to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for its students.

## **Staff professional development and academic practice**

The panel considered this feature to be outstanding.

Evidence in the provider submission describes differentiation of staff focus into three fields (creative education career, professional practice career, research career), each with distinctive and bespoke pathways and activities to support staff development.

Additional evidence in the provider submission includes:

- staff are encouraged to develop their creative work alongside students
- there is a requirement for all academic staff and technicians contributing to undergraduate delivery to study for a teaching qualification before the end of their second year
- staff in the creative education career field are supported by a creative education network portal, with usage evidenced
- there is recognition of technical staff as teachers, with several teaching awards, as well as external recognition for technical education provision and development.

Overall, the panel concluded that there is outstanding support for staff development, and excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider.

## **Learning environment and academic support**

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

The indicator for 'academic support' provides initial evidence of very high quality for full-time students. The indicator for part-time students, though, provides initial evidence of performance below the level of very high quality. The panel noted the provider's high contribution to its own benchmark.

The provider submission supplements the initial evidence from the indicators by providing the following evidence:

- that the provider invests in learning and development curriculum interventions and workshops, with high and increasing take up rates
- social and peer support programmes are co-delivered with the student union, to support mental health, wellbeing, and an app to deliver engagement and self-help
- the university was described as a one-stop student hub in 2019, providing evidence of a decline in cause for concern reports
- the effectiveness of academic support measures includes a survey report showing 81.4 per cent of 1,246 students felt confident about asking for support with their course.

Evidence in the student submission describes 'unanimous' agreement from student focus groups that academic support was excellent, but the panel noted a small sample size.

While the panel noted that the student submission and provider submission do not describe any specific support arrangements for part-time students, it concluded overall that the provider fosters a very high quality learning environment and academic support for most student groups.

## **Learning resources**

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

The indicator for 'learning resources' provides initial evidence of at least very high quality for full-time students. For part-time students there is no initial evidence of very high quality, though the panel noted a high contribution to own benchmark. There were variations for different subjects and students.

Evidence in the provider submission for full-time students includes:

- provision of 'high-cost' facilities and technical equipment, using data to identify usage trends and inform investments
- effective use of learning resources, with library facilities, significant archives and collections
- equipment loads and available bookable space.

There is evidence in the student submission that refers to a wealth of resources to support students, which they are very satisfied with.

The provider submission does not describe any specific arrangements for part-time students with respect to physical and virtual learning resources to support their learning.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider's physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning, demonstrating a very high quality feature for most of the students.

## **Student engagement in improvement**

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

The indicator for 'student voice' provides initial evidence of being very high quality for full-time students, but this varied for different groups and courses.

For part-time students the indicator provides some initial evidence of very high quality, and there was some variation for different groups and courses.

The provider submission provides additional evidence. This includes:

- that the provider uses a wide range of formal and informal quality assurance and quality enhancement mechanisms that actively seek student feedback and lead to actions
- feedback from a report which highlighted the provider working alongside its students
- how programme directors work closely with course representatives to support changes to each of the provider's courses.

The student submission describes evidence regarding the importance students place on being able to influence the running of the university, agreement by students that the university takes feedback seriously, and makes positive changes based on that feedback. However, the panel also notes evidence in the student submission that identified concerns with long gaps between course boards.

Overall, the panel considered that there was compelling evidence that the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements in their experiences and outcomes, and that this applies to most of the provider's groups of students. The panel also identified some elements of outstanding practice within this feature.

## **Student outcomes: Silver**

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

The panel weighed up all the evidence in the indicators and the provider submission relating to the student outcomes aspect as a whole and judged this rating to be 'Silver'.

The panel considered all features except one to be very high quality, for most groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups, as well as one outstanding feature.

In relation to the judgement for student outcomes, the panel considered provision for the part-time OCA students, which represents around 10 per cent of the student body. The panel noted that the provider is no longer responsible for this provision, but did not identify sufficient evidence that the provider addressed the lower indicators for these students during the TEF assessment period.

Considering these points in the round, the panel placed some but limited weight on part-time provision in assessing the student outcome aspect.

The provider acknowledges that outcomes are less positive for students from some underrepresented groups and reports on the actions taken to address this, along with data to show the impact of these actions.

The panel considered the best fit rating to be 'Silver'. This is because all features are at least 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 found this to be a very high quality feature.

The provider submission describes an approach to supportive interventions designed to increase engagement and participation among marginalised groups to produce more equitable outcomes.

Evidence in the provider submission includes:

- investment in identification and support for students at risk of withdrawal and non-completion
- a programme for care-experienced students, and targeted support for students with disabilities
- interventions to provide targeted closure of the black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) achievement gap, through interventions, unconscious bias training, and working with high profile BAME professionals, that has seen significant positive results.

The student submission includes evidence from a survey and two focus groups that covered career readiness and skills support received. Evidence includes:

- high levels of reported academic and personal development improvements in a range of analytical, cognitive, organisational and management skills
- the provider supports students through a creative careers department.

Taking all evidence into consideration, the panel concluded that the provider's approaches are effective and supportive to enable its students to succeed in their studies and to progress towards their chosen careers, including students from underrepresented groups who benefit from specific, targeted interventions to support their progression.

### **Continuation and completion rates**

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

The 'continuation' indicator provides initial evidence of very high quality for full-time students. The indicators vary for different students and courses. The 'continuation' indicators provide initial evidence of outstanding quality for part-time students.

The 'completion' indicator provides initial evidence of very high quality for full-time students, but no initial evidence of very high quality or outstanding quality for part-time students. This also varies for different students and courses.

The provider submission describes continuation and completion that is broadly very high quality, with noted falls in continuation for specific cohorts, as well as a disproportionate impact of the coronavirus pandemic on specific groups. However, the panel did not find evidence that explains why this provider was impacted more than other creative industries providers in relation to these indicators.

Evidence in the provider submission includes:

- a pre-induction programme for students from underrepresented groups

Evidence in the student submission describes support offered to students to help them succeed and progress beyond their studies, in relation to work readiness, and academic and personal development, with survey results indicating high levels of reported improvement.

Overall, taking into account all of the evidence in the indicators, and in the provider and student submissions, the panel concluded that there are very high rates of continuation and completion for most of the provider's courses and groups of students.

## **Progression rates**

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

The indicator for 'progression' provides initial evidence of performance below the level of very high quality for full-time students.

The indicator for 'progression' for part-time students does not provide certainty in terms of evidence.

Further evidence in the provider submission includes:

- that the provider embeds employability skills in the academic plan, supported by standalone activities
- specialised support for 300+ students from underrepresented groups to network with professionals, and secure paid training and employment opportunities, business advice and mentoring towards company start-ups.

The student submission includes survey results, that indicate that the provider prepares its students for their future careers.

The panel noted the indicator evidence, but judged that the submissions provide sufficient additional evidence of positive outcomes, and concluded that there are very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

## **Intended educational gains; and Approaches to supporting educational gains**

The panel considered that in respect of intended educational gains, the provider's performance is outstanding, and found its approaches to supporting educational gains to be very high quality features.

The panel felt that throughout its submission the provider clearly articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant. These gains are further described as being in four main areas: ability to be creative; ability to work in global creative industries; ability to work in project-based teams; and ability to work in an entrepreneurial way.

Further evidence in the provider submission includes:

- that students are supported in their ability to be creative through its focus on interdisciplinarity
- evidence of providing students with the highest levels of global mobility opportunities of any professional group in the UK
- its approach to educational gain beginning before application, through student inductions, in marking criteria and feedback to encourage students' working in an entrepreneurial way and focusing on professional contexts throughout their study
- how its students have access to accredited professional qualifications to ensure professional standards.

However, the panel found it was not always clear in the submission the impact of these activities and the level of engagement with them.

The student submission describes educational gains in relation to support from the provider for its students in academic and personal development, work readiness, team working, and leadership development, with students placing a high priority on gaining skills and experience for employability.

The panel considers that there is evidence that the provider clearly articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve and why these are highly relevant to its students, and that the provider supports its students effectively to achieve the intended gains – available to all of the provider's student groups and courses.

## **Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains**

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

Evidence in the provider submission includes:

- the use of critical dialogues as iterative individual and group meetings throughout a project, to support the student's development as a creative practitioner
- the provider has piloted a minimum expected outcomes process since 2019.

The student submission describes evidence of student outcome focus groups and provides a table of responses to a survey (173 responses) indicating strong positive perceptions of students regarding educational gains.

Having considered the evidence, the panel considers that the provider's evaluation of the educational gain made by its students is supported by the evidence in the provider submission and the student submission, and that there is evidence of a coherent evidence-based strategy to embed and evaluate these gains.

### **Overall: Silver**

The panel considered the overall 'best fit' rating to be 'Silver', having applied the guidance and the panel members' expert judgement to the assessment. It considered the student experience aspect rating to be 'Silver', and the student outcomes aspect rating to be 'Silver', and noted in the guidance that where each aspect rating is awarded the same rating, the overall rating should be the same.