



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

University of Suffolk

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at University of Suffolk 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
- the provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience
- physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning.

There is also an outstanding quality feature:

- course content and delivery inspire students to actively engage in and commit to their learning, and stretch students to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential.

Student outcomes: Silver

Student outcomes are typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- the provider articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students
- the provider effectively supports its students to achieve educational gains.

There is also an outstanding quality feature:

- outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

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.

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 University of Suffolk has an ethos around 'transformative power of higher education - accessible, drive social equality and mobility, and to be a catalyst for change'. It is a small to medium-sized university, with 11,260 full-time and 260 part-time undergraduate students. This number has grown over the assessment period.

Almost all (98.1 per cent) students are undergraduates. The provider's largest subject area for full-time students is Business and Management (66 per cent). Engineering accounts for 31.8 per cent of part-time undergraduates, and Health and Social care accounts for 46.6 per cent of undergraduate apprenticeships.

Almost half of full-time undergraduates are aged 31 or over, 35.6 per cent are 21-30 and 17.4 per cent are under 21. Just over half (55.6 per cent) of full-time undergraduates are female and 44.4 per cent are male.

The provider's students are ethnically diverse, with 54.1 per cent of full-time undergraduates and 92 per cent of apprentices identifying as white, 15.1 per cent of full-time undergraduates identifying as Asian and 12.1 per cent of full-time undergraduates identifying as black.

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 is typically very high quality for the provider's mix of students and courses. Across the student experience aspect, the panel found:

- five very high quality features
- one outstanding quality feature
- one feature where there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate very high quality.

The panel recommend the 'best fit' rating category for this aspect is 'Silver' because it best fits the descriptor that 'all features of the aspect are very high quality for most groups of students', despite one feature having insufficient evidence.

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

Teaching, assessment, and feedback

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

The overall indicator provides very strong evidence of very high quality 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' for full-time students. While this does not apply at the same levels to part-time or apprenticeship students, these are smaller elements of the provider's provision, both constituting less than 2.5 per cent of the student population.

Both indicators provide evidence of outstanding quality for year 4, and also for Business and Management students. The 'assessment and feedback' indicator provides evidence of outstanding quality for Asian students.

The provider submission offers evidence of a very high quality feature including an Ofsted rating of 'Good' for apprenticeship provision and the impact of the tailoring of a new learning and teaching approach to their students and courses. However, the panel deemed that there was insufficient evidence of initiatives tailored towards the provider's large mature student population or initiatives tailored towards supporting students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel concluded 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 an outstanding quality feature.

There is evidence of outstanding course content and delivery practices in the provider submission such as the move to 'block delivery', which is directly relevant to the mix of students, evidence-based, effective, covers all the students at the provider and is directly related to the feature. The

panel therefore considered this to be sufficient evidence of an outstanding feature even without evidence of embedded and sustained impact.

Further evidence provided that course content and delivery encourages engagement and stretch is as follows:

- data from the National Student Survey highlights the positive experience of course content and delivery
- practitioner and industry experts are embedded in the curriculum
- skills modules are embedded in the curriculum
- engagement is through lived experience and content is delivered in partnership.

Taking all the evidence into account, the panel considered that the provider's course content and delivery inspire students to actively engage in and commit to their learning, and stretch students to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential. Overall, the panel judged this to be an outstanding quality feature for the student experience.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

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

Evidence of very high quality provision in this feature includes:

- how teaching has direct links to research institutes and centres, including sharing space, equipment and facilities
- external examiner commendations that offer positive feedback on links to industry
- details of collaboration with community organisations, employers and practitioners
- that academic staff continue to practice in their chosen fields whilst lecturing.

The panel considered that the provider is committed to enhancing the student academic experience through the embedding of research, professional practice and industry engagement in its curriculum. The panel acknowledged that due to the rapid growth of the provider over the assessment period, the provider is at an early stage in fully embedding this feature into the curriculum for their larger courses.

Overall, 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. It judged this a very high quality feature.

Staff professional development and academic practice

The panel considered that there was insufficient evidence that this is a very high quality feature.

The provider submission makes reference to several staff professional development activities such as Accredited Advance HE, an academic framework for career progression pathways and mandatory elements of development before staff can pass their probation. However, there was

insufficient evidence of impact of these activities on the student experience to consider this to be a very high quality feature. Given the size of the institution and its recent growth, the panel would have expected staff professional development opportunities to have grown proportionately. This has not been evidenced in the provider submission. Overall the panel judged that there was insufficient evidence to judge this to be a very high quality feature.

Learning environment and academic support

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

The overall 'academic support' indicator for full-time students provides compelling initial statistical evidence of very high quality.

The panel noted that the provider submission shows an evidence-based framework for academic and student support, which links with the mix of students and courses, and provides good evidence of student engagement.

Evidence of academic support includes:

- a personal academic coaching model, including a coach for all students and a bespoke action plan
- the creation of a seamless learning environment to support placements, with practice staff engaged in all parts of the student journey
- support to develop academic skills.

In conclusion, the panel considered that the provider fosters a supportive learning environment for its students, where readily available, high-quality academic support is accessible for most students. Overall, the panel considered that this is a very high quality feature.

Learning resources

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

The overall 'resources' indicator for full-time students provides strong evidence of a very high quality feature.

Furthermore, evidence in the provider submission indicates a particularly strong investment and enhancement narrative that supports the development of physical and digital resources, and the link with the development of teaching practice is briefly outlined.

Evidence of very high quality physical and virtual learning resources includes:

- a new health and wellbeing building, supporting research, teaching and an integrated care academy
- facilities such as a Digitech campus, a law court and legal advice centre, new architecture and film studios, innovation labs, Mac suites, industry standard equipment and subject specific and generic digital resources.

On the basis of the evidence, the panel considered that the provider's physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning, and that this is a very high quality feature.

Student engagement in improvement

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

The overall 'student voice' indicator for full-time students provides compelling evidence of a very high quality feature.

The provider submission discusses a culture where students are integral members of the academic community and feedback is welcomed and acted upon. The provider has worked to embed engagement and student voice, leading to improvements in student experience. Evidence of this includes a student engagement taskforce, the development of an online feedback platform with students, student experience ambassadors and student voice forums across all programmes.

The panel considered that the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students. Overall it judged this to be a very high quality 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 found that students outcomes are typically very high quality for the provider's mix of students and courses. Across the student outcomes aspect, the panel found:

- four very high quality features
- one outstanding quality feature
- one feature where there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate very high quality.

The panel recommend the 'best fit' rating category for this aspect is 'Silver' because it best fits the descriptor that 'most features of the aspect are very high quality for all groups of students'. The panel's rationale for this is that there is very strong or compelling evidence in the provider submission, and the indicator for 'progression' was judged as outstanding quality. The provider has also clearly articulated its intended gains for students, alongside putting in place plans for evaluation of these.

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

Approaches to supporting student success

The panel considered this a very high quality feature.

The provider submission shows deliberate steps taken to tailor its approach to meet the needs of its mix of students and courses. These include providing opportunities for students to engage productively with tutoring through a standard model, using specialist studios and providing access to academic staff with relevant experience.

The provider notes a progressive approach, and delivery models that support the learner demographic, thus tailoring approaches to support student success. Examples include weekend and evening teaching, a peer assisted study skills programme, academic coaching and learning hubs. The provider submission is clear in its exploration of the issues affecting student success such as the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

Further evidence of very high quality provision includes:

- improved guidance and support pre-arrival for students
- 'block and blend' teaching methods, with initial evidence that impact has been positive
- financial support and financial literacy
- a digital tech support fund
- the timely identification of students at risk.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel concluded that the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies, and that overall this is a very high quality feature.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel considered that there was insufficient evidence that this is a very high quality feature.

The overall 'continuation' and 'completion' indicators for full-time students provide compelling statistical evidence of not very high quality.

The provider submission deals with work that the institution is undertaking in the area of continuation and completion - policies and processes in these areas are clearly explored and some initial data is provided to demonstrate their effectiveness. The panel noted that, in general, it is clear that some are newer and were less embedded during the assessment period, and others have run throughout. There is also key evidence about how the processes are tailored to the provider's mix of students and courses. However, this is acknowledged as new to the provider's development and its association with the assessment period cannot always be determined from the provider submission.

The provider has reviewed student reasons for withdrawal, with money being a primary consideration, and academic failure accounting for only 10 per cent.

The panel considered this feature to have insufficient evidence to be considered as very high quality. However, the panel also acknowledged the work that the provider is doing to target the issues identified, and tailor these approaches to their student demography.

Progression rates

The panel considered this feature to be of outstanding quality.

The overall 'progression' indicator provides evidence of an outstanding feature for full-time students, with similar evidence for part-time and apprenticeship students.

The provider submission also provides evidence of outstanding quality provision in this area, with particular focussed on how the provision for progression is tailored to the mix of students and courses.

Evidence of initiatives to support progression for students includes:

- embedding employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship into the curriculum
- sandwich years, placement modules and professional practice modules
- a FutureMe platform and award.

Overall the panel considered that there are outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses, which when considered in the context of the provider is excellent. The panel judged this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Intended educational gains

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

The provider articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve as cognitive gain, soft skills gain, work readiness and employability. It explains that these gains helps students to succeed academically, grow personally and prosper professionally. These are relevant to its students as it feeds into the provider's ethos of being transformative and into the work the provider does surrounding employability.

The panel considered that the provider articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students. Overall, it judged this to be a very high quality feature.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

The panel considered this a very high quality feature.

The provider submission outlines evidence of work regarding areas of educational gains, including an educational gains plan that includes cognitive gain (academic development); soft skills (personal development); and work-readiness. Approaches to supporting students are tailored and student centred, such as the professional academic coaching programme for all students, which helps students to achieve the provider's articulated gains. The provider is in the earlier stages of

supporting students, however the panel believes the trajectory to an outstanding support system is a potential for the provider.

The panel considered that the provider effectively supports its students to achieve educational gains, and therefore judged this to be a very high quality feature.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

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

The provider submission explains how there are clear plans underway to evaluate gains across all three areas of their articulated gains. These plans draw on existing data and enable the provider to evidence that students are achieving the educational gains.

Whilst this feature has limited evidence, the panel considered that in relation to the size and shape of the provider, and the stage that they are at in relation to their educational gains work, this could be considered a very high quality feature. The panel did not consider this to be outstanding quality as the provider has not yet been able to demonstrate that its students are succeeding in achieving the intended gains.

The panel considers this feature to be very high quality as the provider evaluates the gains made by its students.

Overall: Silver

The panel considered the overall 'best fit' rating for this provider to be 'Silver'. The panel recommend the overall rating of 'Silver' because it recommended the same ratings for both student experience and student outcomes aspects, and both features are typically of very high quality.

The panel found most student experience features to be of very high quality for all groups of students and courses, with some features being outstanding. Most student outcomes features are of very high quality for all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups, and courses. The panel also found there to be some outstanding quality student outcomes features.

In reaching this decision, the panel considered there to be compelling evidence that the outstanding and very high quality features apply to most of the provider's groups of students.