



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

York St John University

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at York St John University and the outcomes it leads to are very high quality.

Student experience: Gold

The student academic experience is typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are highly effective in supporting students' learning, progression and attainment
- course content and delivery to inspire students to actively engage in and commit to their learning
- a supportive learning environment, where students have access to outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs
- resources effectively support outstanding teaching and learning
- effective student engagement which leads to continuous improvement to the experiences and outcomes of its students.

There are also some very high quality features including:

- research in relevant disciplines, innovation, professional practice and employer engagement
- staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted.

Student outcomes: Silver

Student outcomes are typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses
- very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses
- support for students to achieve the provider's intended educational gains.

There are also some outstanding quality features including:

- the deployment and tailoring of approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- the provider articulates the educational gains it intends students to achieve, and why these are relevant to 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

York St John University is an education college founded in 1841 by the Diocese of York. It was awarded university status in 2006 but is still under the guidance of the Cathedrals Group and has Christian foundations.

The provider sets out its educational mission as 'driven by our commitment to social justice, we focus our expertise, talents and creativity to advance knowledge, promote understanding, and achieve educational outcomes for the benefit of all'. It has three outlined values:

- intellectually generous, curious and rigorous
- to promote fairness and challenge prejudice
- to inspire and support each other to succeed.

Each year, the provider has over 9,500 students across campuses in York and London, supported by 1,200 staff members. This splits into roughly 86.8 per cent full-time undergraduate and 13.2 per cent full-time postgraduate. Of the part-time provision, only 7 per cent are undergraduate, with 61.9 per cent postgraduate.

The majority of entrants come with lower-end A-level grades, across DDD or lower (18.6 per cent), CDD or higher (19.8 per cent) and BCC or higher (17.2 per cent). Around 12.5 per cent enter with BTEC (DDM or lower) or 11 per cent access course qualifications.

Courses such as English and Education and Teaching have seen decreases in student numbers over the time of this assessment, but other courses such as Health and Social Care have seen increases.

The assessment considered information about the provider's undergraduate courses and students on those courses.

Full details about the provider's student demographics used in the TEF 2023 assessment are available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/data-used-in-tef-2023/.

More information about this provider can be found on the OfS Register at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/the-register/the-ofs-register/.

Student experience: Gold

Throughout this section, we refer to indicators. These indicators are based on students' responses to the National Student Survey. The indicators are 'benchmarked' to show how well the provider performs for its particular mix of students and courses.

The panel found the quality of the student academic experience is typically outstanding for the provider's mix of students and courses. Across the student experience aspect, the provider embeds effective approaches and tailors them to its students to provide a consistent and excellent student experience. The panel found:

- five features are outstanding, and two of the features are very high quality
- the very high quality and outstanding features apply to most of the provider's courses and groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups
- the panel also considered the provider's underpinning values through its course content, student engagement and support.

Across the student academic experience, it was clear that the provider has considered its mix of students and courses when designing or changing courses or introducing support mechanisms. The panel noted that attention was paid to estranged students and the support for disabled students.

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

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

Teaching, assessment, and feedback; and Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The panel found these features are outstanding.

The indicators for 'teaching on my course' give evidence of very high quality provision, and the indicators for 'assessment and feedback give evidence of outstanding provision.

The provider submission gives evidence of the relationship between the provider's policies and practices, and the impact of those on student experience and student outcomes:

- a community-oriented curriculum has supported over 1,200 adults to complete a specialist mental health course
- social justice embedded throughout the curriculum
- a research-led curriculum contributes to expanding knowledge and skills
- staff challenging students to do their best work increased performance rates
- collaborative design and monitoring of academic programmes
- sector-leading practice is promoted through active involvement with groups

- students are paid to support course content development

The panel also considered evidence of outstanding assessment and feedback practices:

- project-based assessments
- cross-discipline assessment
- programmes in place to ensure consistent but bespoke feedback
- 15-day marking return window.

The student submission supports the work the university has implemented around anonymous marking. It details the response to online teaching during coronavirus and how it enabled students to still feel like they learned the same as they would in the classroom.

Overall, the panel considered there to be sufficient evidence of outstanding quality as the practices detailed are embedded, ensuring highly effective and tailored to supporting their students' learning, progression and attainment, whilst inspiring students to actively engage in and commit to their learning, whilst stretching knowledge and skills.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

The panel considered this a very high quality feature.

The provider submission sets out its approach to research and how it works with professional practices to develop courses.

Some of the specific examples include:

- research-informed teaching with all research-active staff also teaching undergraduate courses
- development of curriculum in dialogue with external partners to ensure professional accreditation
- a committee set up to consider research strengths and local/regional skills gaps when developing new courses.

The submission lacked sufficient detail on the link between research and teaching for the panel to consider this feature outstanding. However, the panel considered there to be sufficient evidence of very high quality where the provider uses research, professional practice and employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience.

Staff professional development and academic practice

The panel found that this is a very high quality feature.

Examples in the provider submission include:

- 98 per cent of academic staff hold Higher Education Academy fellowships and 20 per cent are senior fellows

- a learning and teaching partnership scheme pairs staff to support with their continuous development
- continuing professional development programmes and an academic promotions pathway to support staff to progress to professor
- a scheme identifies and shares good practice and there is recognition programme for excellent teaching
- learning and teaching leads are based in each school.

Overall, there is very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted. There were some elements of outstanding practice, but not enough evidence of how this has been embedded to judge this feature outstanding overall.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel found that this is an outstanding quality feature.

The indicators provide initial evidence of outstanding 'academic support' for all students and courses.

Some of the examples of the evidence include:

- integrated and personalised support including wellbeing, disability, careers, library and study support.
- a triangulated approach to support which is supported by a Learner Analytics Systems, which was launched in 2019-20 to support personalised supportive conversations
- investment in an online provision of mental health support.

The student submission shows that students are highly supportive of the support provided by the provider. It highlighted collaborative work between the provider and the students' union during and after coronavirus, which included a review of the extenuating circumstances policy and the implementation of a 'no detriment' policy.

The panel considered the compelling indicators a good demonstration of the impact of the evidence detailed in the supporting submissions. The student submission indicates a collaborative approach to student support.

Overall, the panel judged the provider ensures a supportive learning environment, and its students have access to a wide and readily available range of outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs.

Learning resources

The panel considered this to be an outstanding feature.

The indicator for 'learning resources' provides evidence of a very high quality feature, and split indicators show an improvement over the time of the assessment.

The provider has improved in these areas by improving resources Computing and Creative arts and by investing in additional wellbeing and disability resources. The indicator data improving over the time series to above the benchmark demonstrates that the provider is making a positive impact on its learning resources.

Other supporting evidence included:

- a digital steering group set up to support the university's move to adopt 'digital first'
- the university and students' union worked together during coronavirus to contact every student to find out what support they needed and provided over a hundred students with equipment to ensure they could continue learning.

The student submission detailed how the provider listened to student feedback on 'lecture capture' and in response embedded 'lecture capture' as standard. The student submission also describes how student feedback informed the development of various capital projects, such as a British Sign Language recording room.

Overall, the panel considered the evidence was sufficient of outstanding quality where both physical and virtual learning resources effectively support outstanding teaching and learning.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel considered this to be an outstanding feature.

The indicators provide very strong evidence that 'student voice' is outstanding for the majority of courses and student groups.

The submissions evidence multiple examples of the provider working with the students' union to develop policy and strategy and close the feedback loop, with a systematic approach to student engagement. Students are also involved in recruitment panels for academic and senior roles. The student submission notes 'Partnership Plus', which is a central factor of the provider's learning, teaching and student experience strategy.

Overall, the panel considered that the provider embeds engagement with its students, leading to continuous improvement to the experiences and outcomes of its students.

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:

- the provider effectively supports its students to achieve very high quality student outcomes
- most features are of very high quality and two are of outstanding quality.

The panel found the very high quality features apply to most of the provider's groups of students and most courses and subjects.

The panel considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Silver' as the aspect is typically very high quality, with some outstanding features. Applying the guidance, the panel found that the description that best fits its assessment is: 'all 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 found that this is an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission describes how it has built strong foundations to improve its continuation, completion, and progression data and that these methods will take time to materialise in the data. The submission also describes how many of its approaches link back to its commitment to social justice and community learning. Some examples of the evidence includes:

- tailored induction and transition with targeted support for underrepresented groups
- supporting action plan to complement its learning, teaching and students experience strategy
- support for estranged students in accessing careers progression services to enhance their post-educational opportunities
- flexible internship scheme with part-time paid work opportunities
- utilisation of internal data dashboards for monitoring continuation, completion and learner dashboard rates.

Overall, the provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies and takes into consideration all groups of students and courses.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel considered this a very high quality feature.

The full-time continuation indicator provided initial evidence of very high continuation rates for the provider's mix of students and courses. There is some variation between student groups and subjects, with Health and Social Care above benchmark and four split indicators below benchmark, giving evidence that the provider's performance is below the level of very high quality for some groups of students and courses.

The part-time continuation indicator provided initial evidence of being outstanding, but with limited certainty in the data.

The full-time completion indicator gives evidence of both very high quality and outstanding provision, with no certainty as to which applies.

The part-time completion indicator gives evidence of outstanding quality.

Where split indicators fell below the benchmark, the submission identified those and provided action plans for addressing performance in those areas.

The panel judged that at this time, there is still too much inconsistency across the split indicators to assess the feature as outstanding, but it acknowledged the work in supporting students to succeed. Therefore, the panel considered there are very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

Progression rates

The panel examined the evidence in the provider submission and in the indicators and considered this to be a very high quality feature.

There was not enough data for the progression rates for part-time students. The panel noted that the indicators give evidence of very high quality progression for full-time students. The split indicators show that the provider's performance varies between student groups and courses, with 10 out of 17 subjects with available data below benchmark, nine of those materially so.

The submission has explained steps that have been put in place to improve the progression of students in those subjects.

This included embedding employability into the curriculum through work-integrated learning from 2019. The provider submission also highlighted tailored approaches to progression which included employer panels and technical skills development opportunities for film and media students, and a new Geosciences facility (launched in 2022) to embed Geography Information Systems (GIS) skills for geography students.

The panel concluded that there are very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

Intended educational gains

The panel considered this an outstanding feature.

The provider submission explains the educational gains it wants its students to receive. This includes 'being community minded', being 'aware of global perspectives' and 'embracing difference', underpinned by social justice and being accredited as a 'University of Sanctuary'.

The panel noted the importance of the co-creation of educational gains with their students to ensure the gains are relevant to the provider's students.

It was evident that the definition and measures of educational gain are still under development with the provider still working to define their approach, but the evidence shows a clear commitment and plan.

Overall, the panel considered the provider clearly articulates the range of educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to its students and their future ambitions.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

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

The provider makes reference to an 'Employability Passport' which will document how students will achieve five outlined graduate attributes. This will be implemented as a result of research being conducted in 2022-23 into what educational gains means for its students.

The panel considered that the provider is at the beginning of their educational gains journey and there have been positive steps outlined for the future, but found limited evidence of very high quality for this feature.

The panel have taken into consideration the commitment to research into educational gains in the future, detailed in this provider submission. The evidence in this submission demonstrates that commitment. The panel considered the evidence for 'approaches to supporting educational gains' and found sufficient evidence of very high quality.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered there was not enough evidence to judge this feature. The absence of this evidence did not prevent the panel from awarding a higher TEF rating.

Overall: Silver

The panel judged that the rating for student experience was 'Gold' and the rating for student outcomes was 'Silver'.

There are a number of outstanding features across the two aspects, however, the panel noted the provider's performance for two features, 'continuation and completion' and 'progression', and considered these important in its overall assessment.

The panel paid particular attention to the efforts of the provider to embed their civic values and social justice across curriculum design, teaching, employability and work-based learning, research and projects, and tailored support for all students.

Considering the overall evidence, the panel judged that the best fit is 'Silver' because there is sufficient evidence that overall student experience and outcomes are typically very high quality, with considerable outstanding elements throughout.