



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

City College Plymouth

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Gold

Typically, the experience students have at City College Plymouth and the outcomes it leads to are outstanding.

Student experience: Gold

The student academic experience is typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are highly effective and tailored to supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment
- course content and delivery which inspire the provider's students to actively engage in and commit to their learning, and which stretch students to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential
- outstanding support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is embedded
- a supportive learning environment, with students having access to a wide and readily available range of outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs
- physical and virtual learning resources are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning
- the student voice is strongly embedded in quality processes and informing strategic aspects of its higher education provision

There is also a very high quality feature:

- using research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for its students.

Student outcomes: Gold

Student outcomes are typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- highly effective approaches in ensuring students succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- rates of continuation and completion among students
- rates of progression
- evidence-based, highly effective and tailored approaches to supporting students to achieve clearly articulated educational gains

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

City College Plymouth is a 'Higher Education (HE) in Further Education (FE)' institution, providing higher education alongside further education, with an educational mission that places emphasis on the vocational and professional curriculum. It says that it 'uses its strong industry engagement to promote excellent graduate opportunities'.

It has around 370 full-time and 190 part-time undergraduate students in 2020-21, the majority of whom study 'other undergraduate' programmes, predominantly foundation degrees and higher national certificates (HNCs).

A large proportion (50 per cent) enter with lower grade A-levels or BTECs/Access qualifications; 80 per cent are local prior to entry; 52 per cent are in Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintiles 1 and 2; 46 per cent are mature; and 34 per cent have a reported disability. The provider says that it embraces the diversity of its student body and designs its academic experience and pastoral support services accordingly.

Around a third of students are pursuing Business and Management or Computing subjects, with a growing Engineering student body, including apprenticeships.

The provider states that this profile 'highlights the diverse nature of our HE student body, which is something we embrace as an institution, ensuring the academic experience of our students, alongside the breadth of pastoral support services, is designed to meet their needs and support their best possible outcomes'.

The assessment considered information about the provider's undergraduate courses and students on those courses. This includes validated-only courses, apprenticeships, foundation degrees and HNCs. The college does not have its own degree awarding powers and in addition to delivering Pearson HNCs and higher national diplomas, it works in partnership with University of Plymouth and Plymouth Marjon University which awards qualifications to students.

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 panel found:

- six features that are outstanding
- one feature that is very high quality
- compelling evidence that the very high quality and outstanding features apply to all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups. These students are particularly well supported in their learning.

The panel applied the criteria and considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Gold'.

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

Teaching, assessment, and feedback

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The indicators provide compelling initial evidence of outstanding quality for both 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' for all the provider's groups of full-time students, including students from underrepresented groups.

This is potentially with the exception of female students, and Business and Management students, with regards to the 'teaching on my course' indicator. The panel noted that this was the only indicator in which female students were an anomaly, and that the number of Business and Management students in the indicator was low, so it did not place considerable weight on this evidence. Also, the panel accepted the provider's explanations about why these anomalies had occurred, and that it was now monitoring these results.

For part-time students and apprenticeships, these two indicators do not suggest the same quality as for full-time students, but there is statistical uncertainty, and the panel said this does not detract from its overall judgement.

In addition, the provider and student submissions outline the provider's commitment to vocational and professional teaching and learning, and how this is reinforced through curriculum design and delivery. This includes an extensive approach to mapping schemes of work, which describes a holistic approach to all stages of teaching and learning; and assessment which is authentic to the workplace and either modelled on real-world scenarios or directly set by industry. The evidence in these submissions applies across the mix of students, including those from underrepresented groups.

The panel concluded that the submissions and indicators provide evidence that highly effective teaching, assessment and feedback practices, which support student's learning, progression and attainment, are embedded across the provider. Overall the panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission explains that it delivers a broad and rich curriculum which equips students with the appropriate skills, supports successful outcomes regarding completion of studies and enables and encourages progression to further study and employment.

The panel considered there to be strong oversight of the quality of all courses by the provider, with the student submission evidencing several elements which are highly regarded by students. These include weekly masterclasses; involvement of employers and professional practitioners in a number of courses; and the provider's 'red book', an innovative attempt to engage students with reflective practice in relation to their employability.

The panel concluded that the submissions show that the provider's course content and delivery inspire students to actively engage in and commit to their learning, and that they stretch students to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential. Accordingly, the panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

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

The provider submission explains that all courses are developed and delivered in partnership with employers, and describes the work-based learning and employer engagement opportunities which are considered as part of the provider's quality review process.

This provider submission also describes students as active participants in research-informed practice, with research achievements shared during an annual College Festival of Research. The student submission provides evidence that students are engaged in this practice, although the evidence does not make clear how widespread this is across all subjects and courses.

The conclusion of the panel was that this 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. Consequently, the panel considered this to be a very high quality feature.

Staff professional development and academic practice

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

In its submission, the provider gives strong evidence of a culture whereby staff are encouraged to 'initiate change, drive improvement and identify support needs', including impressive innovations.

This includes a range of initiatives including:

- several review processes
- investment in six professional development days annually for every member of staff
- a relationship with the professional organisation Society for Education and Training
- an in-house diploma in education and teaching, incorporating student feedback.

The panel considered that the provider has outstanding support for staff professional development, and that excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider. Considering the evidence, the panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The indicator for 'academic support' provides compelling statistical evidence that the provider's performance in this area is outstanding, and split indicators suggest that this applies to all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups. This is potentially with the exception of Business and Management students. As noted above, the number of students in this indicator is low, meaning the panel did not place considerable weight on this evidence, and the panel was satisfied that the provider was monitoring the situation appropriately.

For part-time students and apprenticeships, this indicator does not suggest the same quality as for full-time students, but there is statistical uncertainty, and the panel said this does not detract from its overall judgement.

The provider submission describes its clear commitment to a coordinated approach to student support, including opportunities for students to access face-to-face support. The student submission shows that the majority of students have found one-to-one sessions with lecturers and tutors to be valuable, and notes that students are encouraged to use personal development plans.

The panel concluded from the indicators and submissions that the provider ensures a supportive learning environment, and that its students have access to a wide and readily available range of outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs. Accordingly, the panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Learning resources

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The panel reviewed the 'learning resources' indicator, which provides compelling statistical evidence of outstanding quality for full-time students, with split indicators suggesting that this applies to all groups of students, including those from underrepresented groups. This is potentially with the exception of Business and Management students. As noted above, there are a low number of students in this indicator, meaning the panel did not place considerable weight on this evidence, and the panel was satisfied that the provider was monitoring the situation appropriately.

For part-time students and apprenticeships, this indicator does not suggest the same quality as for full-time students, but there is statistical uncertainty.

The panel considered that there was strong evidence of provision that supports students across a variety of specialist disciplines. It noted that this is not the norm for students at an 'HE in FE' institution, often because of financial constraints. This includes specialist local industry training, a 'digital learning quarter' and use of the Google suite to support blended learning.

The panel considered from the indicators and submissions that physical and virtual learning resources are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning and considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Reviewing the 'student voice' indicator, the panel found compelling statistical evidence of outstanding quality. The split indicators suggest that this applies to all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups.

The panel found evidence of multiple opportunities and mechanisms for students to feed back on their experience, including from dedicated student reps for each stage of courses. The student submission confirmed that there are 53 higher education reps, who meet regularly.

The panel concluded from the submissions and indicators that the student voice is strongly embedded by this provider in quality processes and informing strategic aspects of its higher education provision. Consequently, the panel considered this feature to be of outstanding quality.

Student outcomes: Gold

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 student outcomes are typically of outstanding quality for the provider's mix of courses, and for all of its groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups.

The panel applied the criteria and considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Gold'.

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

Approaches to supporting student success

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The panel saw evidence of integrated approaches for supporting student success, ranging from robust learning tracking mechanisms through to embedded employer engagement systems. This also includes an effective policy of academic, financial, learning and pastoral interventions to reengage students who are at risk of non-continuation.

The provider's submission is themed around employability, reinforcing its stated mission. The panel considered that the provider's decision to offer Performing Arts students the chance to study a top-up award, to improve employability, is a pragmatic and tailored enhancement.

The panel found that the provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies. Accordingly, the panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The indicator for 'continuation' suggested outstanding quality overall, including initial evidence of outstanding quality for full-time students, part-time students and apprenticeships, although with some statistical uncertainty. Split indicators were not available for all groups of students, but where they were, the panel generally came to the same conclusion.

There was some variation for different subject groups, but the panel decided it was not possible to draw conclusions due to the small numbers involved.

In particular, the provider submission notes that continuation for Creative and Performing Arts students is lower. It attributes this to students starting foundation degrees (which are two-year programmes) but then indicating a preference to exit after one year and go into industry. The college has addressed this trend by embedding Level 4 qualifications into the foundation degrees to give an optional exit point after one year.

The indicator for 'completion' suggested evidence of outstanding quality for full-time students. Completion for part-time students is very high quality and there is no completion indicator available for apprenticeships.

The provider submission recognises that completion data for full-time students who were eligible for free school meals is lower, but it also notes that completion data for full-time students affected by disadvantage is stronger, in line with the college's embedded measures to support students through widening access and participation activity.

Having reviewed the indicators and the evidence in the provider submission, the panel judged that there are outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses. On balance, the panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Progression rates

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The 'progression' indicator provides compelling evidence of outstanding quality for both full-time and part-time students.

The provider submission says that the college has a dedicated higher education careers adviser to provide individualised support for students who are uncertain of their next steps. This role has initially focused on students within Performing Arts, which is one of a few subject areas for which indicators showed lower progression rates.

The panel concluded from the submission and indicators that there is evidence of outstanding rates of successful progression and as such, considered this an outstanding quality feature.

Intended educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider's submission explains that it is a partner within a project, funded by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, to develop a toolkit for educational gain models. The provider links this to its focus on access, inclusion, addressing disadvantage and the caring responsibilities which many of its students have.

The panel considered the provider's articulation of the range of educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and the high relevance of these to its students and their future ambitions. The panel found that the inclusion of a graphical model was particularly helpful.

Based on this evidence, the panel concluded that 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. The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission describes an approach to supporting educational gain which focuses on practical and transferable skills, aligning with the provider's mission and its access and participation plans. By mapping barriers students face, skill development activities, and the skills themselves, the provider has developed two key tools, called 'STEP' and 'Develop Me HE', which support educational gains.

The panel found that the provider's approach to support appears to be very comprehensive and carefully overseen through quality assurance and review practices, and the provider submission includes careful analysis of evidence related to educational gain.

The panel considered that the provider's approaches to supporting its students to achieve these gains are evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to its students and their different starting points. As a result, the panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider has a comprehensive data analytics and quality enhancement approach. Its submission detailed plans to build on this with further measurements of its impact through the completion of an annual skills matrix, being piloted during 2022-23 ahead of full implementation in September 2023. The provider also plans to measure impact through quantitative and qualitative analysis of key metrics, including student perception of skills.

The panel judged that the provider evaluates the gains made by its students, and demonstrates its students are succeeding in achieving the intended gains. As such, the panel concluded that this was an outstanding quality feature.

Overall: Gold

The panel rated the student experience aspect 'Gold' and the student outcomes aspect 'Gold'. It noted the guidance that the overall rating should not be higher than the highest aspect rating and should be no more than one rating higher than the lowest aspect rating.

In reaching this decision, the panel considered there to be compelling evidence that the outstanding features apply to all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups which comprise a significant proportion of the provider's students. The panel considered this contextual factor throughout its assessment of all of the evidence.

The panel found most student experience features to be of outstanding quality for all groups of students and courses, and all student outcomes features to be of outstanding quality for all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups, and courses. Across the aspects, the provider has presented compelling evidence to show that its approaches are embedded across the institution, as well as evidence demonstrating that the provider tailors its approaches to its students.

Weighing the two aspects equally and considering all the evidence across all features, it considered the overall 'best fit' rating to be 'Gold'.