



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

University of Derby

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Gold

Typically, the experience students have at the University of Derby and the outcomes it leads to are outstanding.

Student experience: Gold

The student academic experience is typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- outstanding teaching and assessment practices that are tailored to support learning
- course content and delivery that inspires students to actively engage and commit to their learning
- support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice embedded across the provider
- physical and virtual resources that are effectively tailored to support outstanding learning
- a culture of student engagement in service of continuous improvement to the experiences and outcomes of students.

There are also some very high quality features including:

- research, scholarship and employer engagement contribute to a very high academic experience for students
- a highly supportive learning environment, where students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support.

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 mix of students
- highly effective evaluation of gains made by students.

There are also some outstanding quality features including:

- tailored support that is highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- educational gains are clearly articulated and highly relevant to its mix of students' future ambitions
- support to achieve student gains is tailored to the different starting points of 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

The University of Derby is a medium to large university in the East Midlands. Its mission is to be an 'applied university of today and for tomorrow' and is centred around its contribution to social mobility in the City of Derby and the region.

In 2020-21 there were 12,370 full-time undergraduates, 2,020 part-time undergraduates and 540 apprentices. The provider has seen student number growth across the review period, largely apprenticeships, and a rise in online learners, which make up 90 per cent of its part-time undergraduates.

The provider offers a wide range of subjects and courses, the largest programmes being Business and Management and Nursing and Midwifery.

It has diverse mix of students, with the majority of students UK residents. There is a significant population of local students, and the provider offers a variety of routes to entry onto courses, such as foundation programmes.

The provider submission highlights Derby as a city of considerable socioeconomic inequality with challenges in graduate employment local to the provider.

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

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 student experience to be outstanding across all the provider's student groups and the range of its courses and subjects.

Across the student experience aspect the panel found:

- five outstanding quality features
- two very high quality features.

The panel considered that although most indicators provided initial evidence of very high rather than outstanding quality, these differences were acknowledged by the provider and addressed by targeted interventions the provider had made during the TEF period.

The provider also gave evidence of interventions targeted to support various underrepresented groups and their impact, which the panel considered compelling evidence of an approach to ensuring excellent student experiences for its full mix of students.

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

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 considered these are outstanding features.

The indicators provided initial evidence of:

- outstanding 'teaching on my course' for full-time students and apprentices, and very high quality provision for part-time students
- outstanding 'assessment and feedback' for full-time students and apprentices, though the provider's performance is below the level of very high quality for part-time students.

The provider submission addressed the different experiences of part-time students, outlining action that has been taken to address this, including staff training and an online academic framework.

The provider submission gave evidence of an outstanding quality feature, for example:

- approaches to teaching that are tailored to black and disabled students based on research-based projects that have informed curriculum design
- the creation of a new blended learning model to deliver an outstanding learning experience harnessing both virtual and physical learning environments

- provider wide teaching and assessment frameworks which take a whole system approach to promote a sense of belonging, sense of purpose, self-efficacy, resilience and engagement
- an inclusive education framework which has influenced curriculum and assessment design and seeks to address awarding gaps
- an undergraduate research scholarship scheme in which students co-create and undertake research projects with staff, with significant funding support.

The student submission gave supportive evidence that students held the quality of teaching at the provider in high regard. It described that the student voice portal, which is often used by students to identify areas of improvement, had more positive comments relating to the quality of teaching than for any other category of submissions.

The panel considered across the indicators and submissions there was evidence of a highly tailored approach to teaching, borne out of the provider's commitment to social mobility which informed teaching practices to stretch students to achieve their potential.

The panel considered that the provider has embedded outstanding teaching and assessment practices that are tailored to support learning and that course content and delivery inspired students to actively engage and commit to their learning.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

The panel found this a very high quality feature.

The provider submission gave evidence of a very high quality feature including:

- a dedicated team to driving teaching research and innovation, supporting colleagues across the provider to deliver evidence-informed teaching practices. However no evidence was provided as to the level of engagement from teaching staff across the provider
- academics winning National Teaching Fellowships, with subsequent cascading of innovative practice into curricula
- research and engagement with other providers to adapt elements of curriculum design to meet the needs of under-represented groups with positive impacts on student satisfaction
- co-design of resources with industry partners and professional bodies, with 60 per cent of students studying on courses with professional accreditation. This was evidenced by the university's close association with Rolls Royce.

Taking into account all of this evidence, the panel considered the provider had created a very high quality academic experience for its students.

Although many elements were above the high quality minimum requirements, there was not enough evidence that the scholarship and employer engagement had sufficient impact to be considered outstanding. On balance, the panel therefore judged this is a very high quality feature.

Staff professional development and academic practice

The panel considered this an outstanding feature.

The provider submission gave evidence of an outstanding feature, including:

- all new staff without teaching qualifications are required to complete the Post Graduate Certificate of Higher Education or an equivalent apprenticeship in Academic Practice followed by fellowship of Advance Higher Education
- significant engagement with the Advance Higher Education fellowship scheme, with over 600 fellows and 120 Senior Fellows or above. A large proportion of those fellowships included non-teaching staff such as technicians, which the panel judged demonstrated the provider's embedded approach to considering the professional development of all staff contributing to the student experience
- mandatory professional development modules, including on racial equity and digital practice
- Professorships of Teaching and Learning work with colleagues across the provider to promote excellent academic practice
- six successful National Teaching Fellow applications with outcomes of research that inform academic practice.

The panel considered that the provider's outstanding support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice was among the very best for providers of this type across the sector.

The panel judged that the provider's commitment to mandatory training that supports strong student experiences, and the way in which it incorporates non-teaching staff into professional development activities, suggests an outstanding embedding of excellent academic practice across the provider.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel considered this a very high quality feature.

The indicators provide initial evidence that 'academic support' is very high quality for most students, although there was limited certainty in the evidence.

The provider submission gives further evidence of a very high quality feature, including:

- action taken to address digital poverty by providing students with devices
- a robust approach to personal tutoring that supported students academically and contributed to the provider's work on educational gain
- a whole university approach to mental health and implementation of the Advance Higher Education mental health toolkit

- an online programme on accessible content for users with specific impairments.

The student submission recognised the value of the provider's personal academic tutoring programme but it was suggested there were some students who felt the programme could be improved.

The panel noted there was not enough clear indicator evidence and therefore placed more weight on the provider submission when considering this feature. Overall, the panel considered that while generally the evidence was clear that a supportive environment was fostered, and support was available to students, there was not enough evidence that this was tailored to the needs of all groups of the provider's students. As such, the panel considered that this feature was very high quality.

Learning resources

The panel considered this an outstanding quality feature.

The indicator provides evidence that 'learning resources' was very high quality for most students.

- The provider submission gave further evidence, including: significant investment in the library and digital resources which led to a 500 per cent increase in physical library usage
- significant improvements in access to digital scholarly content for those with accessibility requirements, with strong qualitative feedback from students
- initiatives to enable academic librarians to support academic colleagues with increasing the diversity of reading lists and contribute to decolonisation of the curriculum
- sector-leading facilities designed with an industry partner, which support applied learning in an interactive environment built to industry standards
- innovation in simulation-based facilities to continue provision during the coronavirus pandemic, focused on authentic and accessible learning experiences for those needing to acquire clinical skills.

The student submission provided evidence of extremely strong feedback from students regarding library resources and study skills provision. Where students were able to engage with library resources, they praised staff and found resources easy to access and especially supported a transition to 24 hour library and study space opening.

The panel considered that the indicators provided very high quality learning resources for the students. When reaching a decision, the panel noted the emphasis on improving the experience and outcomes for specific groups of students relevant to the context of the provider, which has a diverse student population, including a large number of black students and disabled students.

The panel found the provider has tailored resources to the specific needs of these underrepresented communities. Overall, the panel considered that physical and virtual resources were effectively tailored to support outstanding learning.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel found this to be an outstanding feature.

The indicator provides initial evidence that 'student voice' is outstanding quality for all students and subjects.

The provider submission gives further evidence of an outstanding feature, including:

- a partnership between the provider, students and the students' union, with students co-chairing meetings with dedicated time available to discuss concerns informed by the students' union's research. The panel considered that this would allow concerns to be heard and addressed at an early stage demonstrating a strong commitment to the interests of students
- a robust student representative system with elected representatives on all programmes, including those on distance learning programmes and apprentices
- an online feedback portal which is frequently used by students and responded to in a timely fashion, demonstrating a culture of continuous improvement in collaboration with students.

The student submission gave several examples of effective collaboration and engagement with the provider, including the co-creation of the provider's approach to blended learning. It also highlighted how senior leaders attended regular forums and debates, responding directly to student concerns, with participation consisting of 'open and honest dialogue'.

Overall, the panel judged the activity described in both the provider and student submission, alongside compelling indicator evidence, suggested an embedded culture of student engagement in service of continuous improvement, that was among the very best for similar providers.

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 student outcomes are typically very high quality for the provider's mix of students and courses.

Across the student outcomes aspect, the panel found:

- three outstanding quality features
- three very high quality features.

The panel applied the criteria and considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Silver'. This is because all features are very high quality for most groups of students and courses. The panel did

not think that 'Gold' would be the best fit because only half the features of the aspect were outstanding.

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

Approaches to supporting student success

The panel found this feature to be outstanding.

The provider submission provides evidence of its approach to supporting students, including:

- significant investment in bridging the gap between university and previous education through a range of transition activities, which internal survey data shows is very well received by students
- a robust academic tutoring programme, and other activity tailored to support students from underrepresented backgrounds which are linked to the progress students make in and beyond their studies, focussing on personal development and educational gain
- activities that support wellbeing, including workshops on mental health and money management which have built resilience and self-confidence contributing to higher rates of continuation, especially for disabled students
- a peer-assisted learning scheme in partnership with the students' union to support foundation and first-year students to successfully transition into and progress at the provider. Internal survey data shows participants and leaders considered it to have enhanced their learning.

The provider submission also outlined its efforts, through its curriculum design and educational frameworks, to create inclusive curricula to support students from under-represented group to complete their courses.

Overall, the panel considered the support offered by the provider is tailored and highly effective in ensuring students succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

Continuation and completion rates

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

The 'continuation' indicator gives evidence of very high quality provision for full-time students, and outstanding quality for part-time and apprenticeship students.

The 'completion' indicator gives evidence of very high quality provision for full-time and part-time students, and outstanding quality for apprenticeships.

The provider submission highlighted the positive impact of its personal tutoring programme on continuation rates and its wider package of support set out above, which have assisted in closing of continuation gaps for underrepresented groups. The student submission describes the contribution of the students' union to student outcomes through creating a sense of belonging.

Overall, the panel found that for most students and courses, continuation and completion were very high.

Progression rates

The panel considered this a very high quality feature.

The 'progression' indicator provides initial evidence of provider performance which is below the level of very high quality for full-time students, though with limited certainty in the data.

There is evidence from the indicators of outstanding 'progression' for part-time students and very high quality for apprenticeships (although with limited certainty).

The provider submission outlined how engagement with public sector employers had been used to provide career opportunities for part-time students, and how a large proportion of courses are professionally accredited with strong engagement with employers, as part of a strategic plan to grow apprenticeship provision and improve opportunities for students in the local job market.

There was evidence of considerable work to address progression gaps for underrepresented groups. The provider submission also outlined its offer of work experience programmes, internships and the creation of a placement academy in 2021 to facilitate further engagement with year-long industrial placements.

Evidence was provided by the provider about the local employment market to explain that while the provider's graduates may enter the labour market in lower paid roles, they perform well in the longer term. This was given considerable weight by the panel, which considered that, alongside interventions made by the provider, it demonstrated a strategic approach that recognised the obstacles faced and suggested a coherent plan for future improvement.

Taking into account the indicator data and evidence provided by the provider of mitigation impactful interventions for underrepresented groups, the panel concluded that overall there are very high rates of successful progression for the provider's mix of students.

Intended educational gains

The panel found this feature to be outstanding.

The provider defined educational gains in terms of social mobility, focused on graduate readiness and the ability of students to develop a sense of self through their educational experience. There was a clear commitment to the development of skills necessary for both academic success and future success in the job market. This was consistent with the provider's learning and teaching frameworks and appeared to be highly relevant to its mix of students' future ambitions because of the commitment to narrow social disadvantages.

The panel concluded 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; and Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel found these are outstanding and very high quality features respectively.

The panel found the provider used its own research to fully understand the barriers faced by underrepresented groups and was able to show how it has successfully raised progression rates for some groups. There was evidence of significant interventions to provide work experience to support development.

The provider submission outlined how the provider intended to measure progress, and there was some evidence of how gains so far were strongest among underrepresented groups. Students felt they had developed their academic knowledge and skills in a way that would be useful for their future careers.

The panel concluded the provider provided strong evidence it tailored its work to the different starting points of students. The panel considered evaluation of gains made by students but could not yet show that all groups of students succeed in achieving them, and therefore judged this feature 'very high quality; instead of 'outstanding.'

Overall: Gold

The panel found the best fit rating to be 'Gold.'

The panel considered the student experience aspect to be 'Gold' and the student outcomes aspect to be 'Silver'. The panel weighted these two aspects equally and considered all the evidence across all features and across all the provider's student groups, subjects and courses.

In reaching this decision, the panel considered there to be compelling evidence that the outstanding and very high quality features apply to all or nearly all of the provider's groups of students. The panel also placed considerable weight on the way in which the provider had taken a strategic approach to tailoring approaches and interventions to support students from underrepresented groups, which have led to improvements.

The panel found the provider fosters a culture of collaboration and partnership with students and employers, making targeted interventions based on student feedback and continually refining its approach to creating an outstanding provision. Overall, the panel concluded that the best fit rating is 'Gold.' The panel considered if 'Silver' was appropriate but found there to be typically outstanding quality provision rather than typically very high quality provision.