



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

## **Summary TEF 2023 panel statement**

**University College Birmingham**

# Summary of outcomes

## Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at University College Birmingham 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:

- embedding very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices to support students' learning, progression, and attainment
- uses practice and employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for students
- very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted
- a supportive learning environment, effectively tailored to the needs of students physical and virtual learning resources used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning
- effectively engaging with students, leading to improvements to their experiences and outcomes.

### Student outcomes: Silver

Student outcomes are typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- supporting students to succeed in and beyond their studies
- very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses
- 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 these gains
- The provider evaluates the gains made by its 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

University College Birmingham outlines its educational mission as to 'promote and provide the opportunity for participation in the learning process by those with the ambition and commitment to succeed'. It aims to provide an individualised experience and promote equality of opportunity, academic development, and vocational experience. It sees itself as a teaching led institution with a professionally focused curriculum.

During the TEF period the provider has between 4,000 and 5,000 full-time undergraduate students each year. Part-time student numbers are less than 300. Although most undergraduate students study first degrees, a significant proportion studied other undergraduate courses. The provider focuses on ten subject areas, with almost half of full-time students studying Business and Management (42.7 per cent).

The majority (61.4 per cent) of the provider's students are of students are under 21 years, while 10.1 per cent are 31 years or over. Many of its students (31.7 per cent) were eligible for free school meals. Notable numbers of students entered after completing access courses or similar (36.7 per cent) and BTECs (16.5 per cent).

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

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

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

## Student experience: Silver

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

Across the aspect it found:

- six features are very high quality
- there was not enough evidence to judge one feature very high quality.

In weighing the evidence, the panel has taken into consideration points made in the provider submission about the impact of Foundation degree students on its data. The panel also considered how the portfolio of the provider has significantly changed, with the provider making the case that historical data does not reflect its current position. As directed by the guidance, the panel has made judgments that reflect student experience over the four year assessment period as a whole, without weighting the years differently.

The panel applied the criteria and found the 'best fit' rating to be 'Silver'. This is because, the panel found most features are very high quality for all groups of students, consistent with a rating of 'Silver'.

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

### Teaching, assessment, and feedback

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The indicators showed:

- for full-time students there is compelling initial evidence that 'teaching on my course' is either below very high quality or very high quality. There is compelling initial evidence that 'assessment and feedback' is very high quality
- for part-time students there is very strong initial evidence of very high quality or outstanding 'teaching on my course'. The data was not certain enough to show any initial evidence for 'assessment and feedback'.

The provider and student submissions show further evidence of very high quality including:

- a new student success strategy with three pillars: disability and inclusive teaching through vocational programmes; opportunities and skills through an innovative curriculum; and shaping sustainable futures and global citizenship
- a structured course quality enhancement process using student and external examiner feedback
- positive external examiner comments on industry focused assignments and timely feedback

- a provider wide approach to inclusive practice, including inclusive assessment and curriculum content
- the majority of academic staff were nominated for the 2022 Spotlight on Great Teaching Awards
- a teaching observation scheme showing effective staff engagement with students, making connections between sessions and explaining key ideas
- student feedback shows they highly rate teaching quality based on survey data, as well as high ratings for assessment and very positive placement feedback. However they did note that coronavirus caused a negative impact on the online teaching experience.

The panel concluded that the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment. This is consistent with a very high quality feature.

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

The panel considered there was not enough evidence to judge this feature as very high quality.

The panel looked at evidence including the wide range of vocationally led programmes and future focused curriculum and teaching methods. The panel also considered the indicators for 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback'.

The panel judged that there was insufficient evidence that course content and delivery effectively encourage the provider's students to engage in their learning, and stretch students to develop their knowledge and skills. Therefore, they were unable to consider this feature very high quality.

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

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

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

- seven professional and statutory regulatory body accreditations, including gold accreditation in hospitality
- an institution wide employer board, along with employer engagement across courses including live projects and placements
- engagement with the 2022 Commonwealth Games leading to placements and experiential learning opportunities for students
- industry input into the design of engineering, digital, and cyber facilities to ensure alignment to industry standards.

The panel concluded that the provider uses practice and employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for its students. This is consistent with a very high quality feature.

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

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

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

- an induction and probation process for new staff, incorporating training on learning resources and mentoring support
- an annual teaching observation scheme covering all staff, with support for those who are not meeting quality expectations
- staff are required to engage with industry through an exchange scheme, leading to up to date industry knowledge and skills, which enriches their teaching
- 81 per cent of teaching staff hold teaching qualifications, and support is available for others to gain teaching accreditation. There is also a requirement for new staff to complete a postgraduate certificate in higher education
- various continuing professional development activities, including a teaching and learning conference with over 70 per cent staff attendance
- a staff progression framework offering pathways to senior roles, including criteria around outstanding teaching.

The panel considered how much the evidence showed promotion of excellent academic practice by the provider and how far this is embedded.

The panel concluded there is very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted. This is consistent with a very high quality feature.

## **Learning environment and academic support**

The panel found this feature to be very high quality, with some outstanding elements.

The indicator showed:

- for full-time students there was very strong initial evidence that 'academic support' is very high quality
- for part-time students there was probable initial evidence that 'academic support' is either very high quality or outstanding.

The provider and student submissions also showed evidence of very high quality or outstanding features including:

- support for students with disabilities, including through specialised tutors
- the graduate advantage scheme offers weekly support with academic, personal and graduate development, with 96 per cent of students surveyed saying the support is valued

- personal tutoring has been realigned to focus personalised help with goal setting, engagement, and enhancing support for students
- academic skills and English language support has a 97 per cent satisfaction rate
- student analytics are used to identify students who are not engaging with their studies, and provide proactive support. This resulted in improved academic performance and reduced withdrawal rates
- the kickstart scheme offers resources such as learning materials to students
- the provider received the WhatUni student choice award for student support, based on positive student reviews
- comments in the student submission highlight the high ratings given by students for their academic support.

The panel considered the extent to which there was evidence that there was a supportive learning environment tailored to the needs of the mix of students but there was insufficient evidence of outstanding quality. Looking at the evidence, the panel judged the provider fosters a supportive learning environment, and its students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support. This is consistent with a very high quality feature.

## **Learning resources**

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

The indicator shows:

- for full-time students there is compelling initial evidence that 'learning resources' are very high quality
- for part-time students there is probable initial evidence that 'learning resources' are either very high quality or outstanding.

The provider and student submissions showed evidence of a high quality feature including:

- investment in teaching estate and specialised facilities, including for sports, catering, and health
- a public facing restaurant and cafes provide settings for experiential learning with industry standard facilities
- implementing digital teaching resources, such as a system allowing students to engage with multimedia resources and tutors ahead of classes. This led to improved teaching efficiency and received a national award, with the software now being rolled out to all staff



- the assignment life cycle project, conducted through the virtual learning environment, received high student reach and engagement. Students commented on it being helpful, informative, and easy to use
- using virtual technologies for interprofessional learning, including a 360-degree immersive video room and 3D cadaver images to help students engage with complex materials
- positive feedback in the student submission on learning resources.

The panel considered how much the evidence showed that learning resources are tailored to the needs of the mix of students.

The panel concluded that this is a very high quality feature, with physical and virtual learning resources used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning.

### **Student engagement in improvement**

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

The indicator shows:

- for full-time students there is compelling evidence 'student voice' is either very high quality or below very high quality
- for part-time students there is very strong evidence 'student voice' is either very high quality or outstanding.

The provider and student submissions also showed evidence of a very high quality feature including:

- using surveys at module and course levels to gather student feedback
- adopting vodcasts or recorded presentations to provide feedback to students, leading to increased engagement with mid module surveys
- using national student survey data to make improvements to courses such as health and social care. This led to higher satisfaction rates in these areas
- student feedback highlights examples of where the provider changed practices based on student input and emphasises how student voice is included in planning developments.

The panel considered how much the provider's policies and practices showed evidence of continuous improvement in experiences and outcomes for students. Looking at the evidence overall, the panel found the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students. This is consistent with 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 considered student outcomes are typically very high quality for all groups of students. Across the aspect it found:

- five features are very high quality
- there is not enough evidence to judge one feature very high quality.

The panel applied the criteria and considered that the rating with the best fit is ‘Silver’. This is because most features are very high quality for all groups of students, consistent with a rating of ‘Silver’.

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 very high quality.

The provider and student submissions showed evidence of a very high quality feature, including:

- undertaking an analysis to understand the factors influencing the success of its diverse student body, followed by some interventions to address the challenges identified
- initiatives like placements, the step into your future programme, and other support to develop students' employability
- evidence previously discussed in relation to academic success, including action taken by the provider to support student success in their studies, and tailoring this to the unique needs of its student population
- student feedback notes the positive outcomes of students' and their contributions to the local community.

The panel judged that the evidence show the provider supports students to succeed, but did not see enough evidence that these were sufficiently tailored to the needs and aspirations of all students.

Considering the evidence,, the panel found that the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies, consistent with a very high quality feature.

### **Continuation and completion rates**

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

The indicators showed:

- for full-time students there is compelling evidence that ‘continuation’ is very high quality; while there is compelling evidence that ‘completion’ is either very high quality or below very high quality

- for part-time students there is compelling evidence that ‘continuation’ is either very high quality or outstanding; while there is probable evidence that ‘completion’ is either very high quality or outstanding.

Considering all the evidence from the indicators, the panel found there are very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider’s students and courses.

## **Progression rates**

The panel found there is not enough evidence to judge this feature as very high quality.

The indicator showed that for both full-time and part-time students there is compelling evidence that ‘progression’ is below very high quality.

The panel examined the data provided in the indicators. Alongside this it considered additional evidence in the provider submission including, among other things, comments on the potential impact of interim study, its mix of courses, and the classification of outcomes for students in some subjects such as Culinary Arts.

When considering all the evidence, the panel concluded that there is insufficient evidence of very high rates of successful progression for the provider’s students and courses.

## **Intended educational gains**

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The panel noted that the provider submission articulates educational gains as academic gain, career and skills gain, and personal gain. These are relevant to the provider’s mix of students and courses, as well as being aligned to its wider educational mission.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students. This is consistent with a very high quality feature.

## **Approaches to supporting educational gains**

The panel found this was a very high quality feature.

The provider submission showed evidence of very high quality, including:

- using the academic skill and English task to understand the diverse starting points of its students
- graduate teaching assistants are employed to serve as role models for students
- putting a comprehensive strategy in place to support the student journey from entry to higher education and beyond. This aligns with the provider’s policies and actions around teaching, assessment, academic support, continuation, and completion.

Considering all the evidence, the panel concluded that the provider effectively supports its students to achieve these gains, consistent with a very high quality feature.

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

The panel found this was a very high quality feature.

Evidence in the provider submission shows:

- a 'value added' measure to evaluate the progress between students' entry and exit qualifications. This takes into account student characteristics
- a career readiness survey to measure educational gain around careers and skills. This results in a gain of around 7 per cent
- student engagement scores are used as an indirect indicator of their personal gains. The provider is currently developing a direct mechanism to assess this.

The panel found strong evidence of evaluating educational gains, but concluded there was not enough evidence that students are achieving all aspects of educational gain.

Considering the evidence, the panel judged the provider evaluates the gains made by its students, consistent with a very high quality feature.

### **Overall: Silver**

Based on the guidance and the expert judgement of panel members, the panel found the 'best fit' rating to be 'Silver'.

The panel considered student experience features to be 'Silver'; and student outcomes features to be 'Silver' and gave equal weight to both. It carefully examined the evidence across all features, student groups, subjects, and courses.

In judging 'Silver' to be the best fit, the panel judged the evidence showed that student experience and outcomes are typically very high quality.