



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

## **Summary TEF 2023 panel statement**

**Spurgeon's College**

# Summary of Outcomes

## Overall: Gold

Typically, the experience students have at Spurgeon's College and the outcomes it leads to are outstanding.

### Student experience: Gold

The student academic experience is typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- outstanding teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are highly effective and tailored to supporting students' learning, progression, and attainment
- course content and delivery that inspires students to actively engage in their learning
- use of research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement contribute to an outstanding academic experience for students
- outstanding support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider
- a supportive learning environment, ensuring its students have access to a wide range of outstanding academic support tailored to their needs.

There are also some very high quality features including:

- physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning
- effective engagement with students, leading to improvements to the experience and outcomes of its students.

### Student outcomes: Gold

Student outcomes are typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the providers students and courses
- outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses
- a clear articulation of the range of educational gains the provider intends its students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to its students and their future ambitions
- support for achieving educational gains that is evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to its students and their different starting points
- the provider evaluates the gains made by its students, and demonstrates its students are succeeding and achieving the intended gains.

There is also one very high quality feature:

- the provider effectively supports students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

# 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

Spurgeon's College, in South London, was founded in 1856 by Victorian minister Charles Haddon Spurgeon. The college was created to train ministers from socio-economic backgrounds where they had received no formal academic education but showed potential to be successfully ordained ministers. This is a philosophy that the college retains today, with a focus on access and participation within its student recruitment.

The provider's defining mission is:

"To provide an excellent education in a supportive environment, in particular training those called to Christian mission, ministry and leadership in the contemporary world."

The provider also has institutional and formal associations with the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB). It was awarded Taught Degree Awarding Powers in 2022.

Between 2017-18 and 2020-21 the provider reported between 170 and 220 part-time students each year. Most of these students were enrolled on other undergraduate courses. During the same period, the number of full-time students fell from 60 to 30. Most full-time students were enrolled on first degree courses.

A large number of students are from low socio-economic backgrounds. Most are mature students and there are a high number of black students. The panel has taken account of the context of the provider and the characteristics of its students and courses.

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

- five features are of outstanding quality
- two features of very high quality
- evidence of at least very high quality across all groups of students and for all courses and subjects, including students from underrepresented groups.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and considered the best fit rating to be '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**

The panel found this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The indicators showed outstanding 'assessment and feedback' for part-time students. There was no data available for the indicator 'teaching on my course'.

Further evidence of outstanding quality in the provider submission included:

- a learning, teaching and assessment framework which aligns teaching practice to the pedagogic philosophy of the provider
- peer review of teaching
- monthly meetings of teaching staff and training to support delivery
- the use of a variety of forms of assessment supported by an assessment policy
- workplace learning, which is overseen by a Director of Placement and supported by a guide for placement providers and students.

The student submission included positive comments from the students on the quality of the teaching, assessment and feedback and support provided during placements.

Overall, the panel recognises the evidence across the indicator data, provider and student submissions show the provider has embedded outstanding practices that are highly effective and tailored to supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment.

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

The panel found this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission provided evidence of outstanding quality, including:

- the process through which the new undergraduate course was designed, which engaged a range of stakeholders including recent graduates, employers and students
- positive comments from internal feedback surveys which identify stretch and intellectually stimulating content

- alignment with the requirements of the Baptist Union of Britain which sets national standards for ministerial recognition and functions as a professional, statutory and regularity body.

The student submission included the following evidence:

- staff are 'good at facilitating an open exchange of diverse views' and 'stretch students' understanding of the course topics'
- course content includes contemporary ideas alongside foundational material
- teaching engages students from diverse backgrounds and positions in the church community and culture
- formative assessment opportunities are valued by students.

With the 'assessment and feedback' indicator above providing compelling initial evidence of outstanding quality, supported by compelling evidence in both the provider and student submissions, the panel concluded that the provider's course content and delivery inspire the provider's students to actively engage in their learning and stretch students to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential.

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

The panel found this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Evidence of outstanding quality in the provider submission included:

- a strategic approach to deliver research led and experience based learning
- staff engagement in pedagogic development work and development of their subject knowledge which informs their teaching
- annual meetings between the Baptist Union of Great Britain's regional team and senior staff at the provider to discuss the curriculum and requirements for newly qualified ministers.

Considering the evidence, the panel concluded that the provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement to contribute to an outstanding academic experience for its students.

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

The panel found this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission showed evidence of outstanding quality, including:

- 90 per cent of academic staff hold Advance Higher Education Fellowship. One member of staff has Principal Fellowship, and one has Senior Fellowship
- staff are encouraged and supported to attend conferences and present academic papers in their areas of expertise
- staff have fellowships of scholarly bodies and engage in external academic networks.

Considering the evidence, the panel judged there to be outstanding support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider.

## **Learning environment and academic support**

The panel considered this feature to be of outstanding quality.

The indicators provide strong initial evidence that the quality of 'academic support' is outstanding for part-time students.

Further evidence in the provider submission includes:

- the Designated Quality Body (DQB) commented positively on the 'holistic personal development in a safe but challenging environment, motivating students to engage in learning and in a supportive and diverse community'
- the provider monitors the progress of students and their academic, personal and professional development
- a framework of support for study skills
- pastoral groups which engage students with peers, provide opportunity for prayer, and provide a forum in which any concerns can be explored
- a values based approach aligned to the providers mission and philosophy.

The student submission included the following evidence:

- timetabling aiming to take account of student needs
- study skills tutors who are accessible through face to face or video formats
- lecturers who are available to support students outside classes.

The panel judged there was sufficient evidence that 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 a very high quality feature.

The indicator evidence for 'learning resources' did not have enough statistical certainty to give an initial indication of very high or outstanding quality.

Evidence of very high quality in the provider submission included:

- a video capture system in every lecture room, where the recordings are widely accessed by students
- training for students led by the full-time Digital Learning Officer
- the use of online library resources during coronavirus, however there is a lack of evidence on how this was received by students
- 1,000 new books in the library each year.

The student submission provides evidence that the provider recognises that many students do not live near the provider and therefore provides digital resources which are valued by students to support access.

Overall, the panel considered there to be enough evidence from the student and provider submissions that physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high

quality teaching and learning. However, there was not enough evidence this was of outstanding quality.

## **Student engagement in improvement**

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

The indicator showed strong evidence of outstanding 'student voice' for all students.

The provider submission showed evidence that there is student representation on a range of the provider's Board of Governors and committees relating to academic experience but did not provide evidence that student engagement through the policies and practice outlined by the provider had resulted in continuous improvements in elements of the academic experience.

Therefore, the panel concluded that the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students, but there is not enough evidence that policies and practice are embedded and result in continuous improvement.

The panel concluded that there was sufficient evidence of very high quality provision relating to student engagement in improvement but insufficient evidence 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 the student outcomes are typically outstanding for the provider's mix of students and courses.

Across the student outcomes aspect, the panel found:

- most features are of outstanding quality
- one very high quality feature
- evidence of at least very high quality across all groups of students, and for all courses and subjects, including students from underrepresented groups.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and found the best fit rating to be '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 outcomes features is set out below.

## **Approaches to supporting student success**

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

Evidence in the provider submission included:

- evidence that the provider recruits students with diverse prior experiences and provides tailored support to support their success. This was substantiated by evidence from the student submission
- graduate outcomes data that demonstrate that a high proportion of graduates utilise what they have learned in their studies



- provision that is tailored to equip students for employment in Baptist ministry and which is tailored to equip them to achieve this
- provision designed to prepare students for the challenges of working in the community, which includes practical skills and the relationship between theory and practical application
- seamless support to post-graduation Newly Accredited Minister support.

The student submission states that students who do not intend to enter Baptist ministry are also supported to benefit from their engagement and learning. However, the panel found that the provider did not provide enough evidence of how it supports students to succeed beyond their studies where they do not enter ministry.

Overall, the panel found there was evidence that the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies, however there was not enough evidence that this is tailored to all groups of students. The panel therefore concluded this was a very high quality feature, rather than outstanding.

### **Continuation and completion rates**

The panel considered this to be an outstanding feature.

The indicators provide very strong initial evidence of:

- outstanding 'continuation' for all students
- outstanding 'completion' for full time students.

Assessing the indicator evidence, the panel concluded there are outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

### **Progression rates**

The panel found this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The 'progression' indicator data was not available for full-time and part-time students but the provider submission provided evidence of outstanding quality.

The provider works closely in partnership with the industry sector, with churches and church/missional settings providing placements for ministerial students and roles for them after graduation.

The panel considered that the provider's BA (Hons) in Theology with Ministerial Formation, and BA (Hons) in Theology with Chaplaincy, are mapped in detail against the BUGB's Marks of Ministry. This BUGB document defines ministry by a set of characteristics, including professional competencies, that all accredited ministers, regardless of their setting, are expected to exhibit.

Taking this evidence into account, the panel concluded that there are outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

### **Intended educational gains**

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider states that educational gains include developing students':

- understanding of theology
- critical, analytical and comparative skills

- ability to be effective practitioners
- leadership skills and skills to run an SME
- ministerial skills.

The provider also outlines its philosophy of ministerial formation and outlines six dimensions relating to these.

The provider refers to distance travelled by their students, which aligns with other evidence in the provider and student statements on the tailored support for students from different starting points.

The panel therefore judged that provider articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students and their future ambitions.

### **Approaches to supporting educational gains**

The panel considered this an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission provided evidence of outstanding quality, including:

- support for the development of educational gains that is tailored to the needs of students through policies and practices of personal tutoring and pastoral groups
- assessment undertaken by the learning enhancement department which take place at the start of the course to support students to 'reach their potential'
- engagement with the wider Baptist community and network of churches and organisations that support students to develop their gain through placement learning, course content, and progression to ministerial employment.

The panel concluded 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.

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

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission showed evidence of outstanding quality, including:

- each Minister in Training engages in a yearly personal spiritual development interview and annual review where progress is measured against the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) Marks of Ministry and the core competencies expected of a professional minister
- each aspect of its courses is 'analysed, assessed and evaluated, in partnership with the PSRB, regional and local employers, students, faculty and external academic subject matter experts, to ensure that graduates from Spurgeon's College can succeed in achieving its intended educational / learning gains'. The level of consultation within the curriculum is an outstanding commitment from the provider to ensure that the content of its courses remains effective and up to date to facilitate its students attaining outstanding quality in their outcomes.

As a result, the panel concluded that the provider evaluates the gains made by its students, and demonstrates its students are succeeding and achieving the intended gains.

### **Overall: Gold**

The panel considered the ratings criteria and considered the best fit rating to be 'Gold'.

The panel judged that the rating for the student experience aspect was 'Gold' and the rating for the student outcomes aspect was 'Gold'. Considering the overall evidence, the panel concluded that the best fit is 'Gold'. This is because both the student experience and student outcomes aspects are typically outstanding.