



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

## **Summary TEF 2023 panel statement**

**Royal College of Music**

# Summary of outcomes

## Overall: Gold

Typically, the experience students have at Royal College of Music and the outcomes it leads to are outstanding.

### Student experience: Gold

The student academic experience is typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- embedded, 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 and commit to their learning, and stretches students to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential
- use of research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement to contribute to an outstanding academic experience for students
- a supportive learning environment, where students have 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.

There is also a very high quality feature:

- very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice

### Student outcomes: Gold

Student outcomes are typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- tailored approaches that are highly effective in ensuring students succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- outstanding rates of continuation and completion for students
- outstanding rates of successful progression for students
- a clearly articulated range of educational gains intended for students to achieve, that are highly relevant to students and their future ambitions
- approaches to supporting students to achieve these gains are evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to students and their different starting points.

# 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 Royal College of Music sets out its mission as a small and specialist provider to deliver practical training of performers and composers for the music profession, in the broadest sense. It aims to provide 'an outstanding learning environment, complemented by access to extensive resources and tailored academic support, which fosters an environment where students are empowered to fulfil their musical potential'.

The provider has a single campus in London where it offers undergraduates a Bachelor of Music four-year degree programme. 450 full-time undergraduate and 420 full-time postgraduate students studied with the college in 2020-21. It also had 50 part-time post-graduate students and 90 offshore undergraduate students in transnational education.

The vast majority (92.7 per cent) of the provider's students are under the age of 21. Most are not from the local area (89.7 per cent) and around 44.2 per cent are international students. A small minority (9 per cent) are from the most disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. 11.6 per cent of students have a disability. Around half of students enter with A level qualifications.

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 <https://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/](https://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 considered that the student experience is typically outstanding. Across the aspect the panel found:

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

The panel judged that the very high quality and outstanding features apply to all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups.

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

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

### **Teaching, assessment, and feedback**

The panel found this feature to be outstanding.

The indicators showed initial evidence that, for full-time students:

- 'teaching on my course' is either very high or outstanding quality, although the data could not provide certainty
- there is initial evidence that 'assessment and feedback' is very high quality.

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

- a learning, teaching, and assessment strategy underpinned by five key pillars which are woven into curriculum design, delivery, and assessment. This supports the development of every student's technical, artistic, personal, and professional skills
- all undergraduate students specialise in a principal study and receive weekly one-to-one individual tuition. This highly personalised approach enables the provider to nurture students' potential and offer detailed feedback specifically tailored to their needs
- all modules are taught in small groups or through one-to-one tutorials or supervision, so students can learn at a pace that suits them and are assessed at an appropriate level

- all students study a curriculum of core contextual subjects including musicianship, aural, history, educational leadership, and professional skills, among others. In later years students can tailor the programme to their strengths and career aspirations
- the final two years assessments are practical and performance assessment take place in public with industry panellists, increasing the career readiness of its students.

The panel considered the characteristics of the student body as relevant when looking at this evidence.

The panel considered there is evidence of a coherent and effective approach, which leads to consistently excellent student experience of teaching, feedback and assessment.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel concluded the provider has embedded outstanding teaching, feedback and assessment 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 feature to be outstanding.

The provider and student submissions include evidence of outstanding quality, including:

- a catalogue of over 50 elective modules, enabling students to tailor their learning to align with their own professional goals, and encouraging increasing levels of engagement
- how students are encouraged through tutor support to choose their own repertoires to perform, and offered lists of underrepresented composers to engage with in their compositional choices
- above sector average National Student Survey results, with 94 per cent of students saying staff are good at explaining things while 88 per cent think staff have made the subject interesting.

Overall, the panel found the provider's course content and delivery inspire its students to actively engage in and commit to their learning, and stretch students to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential. This is consistent with an outstanding quality feature.

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

The panel considered this feature is outstanding.

The provider and student submissions include evidence, such as:

- highly qualified teaching staff, comprising internationally recognised musicians, educators, and academics. With over 300 specialist performance and composition professors, instructors teach while maintaining their professional careers
- the high staff to student ratio offers students one-to-one instruction from expert professional musicians who are active and highly regarded in the music industry

- the quality of teaching staff is consistently recognised in the National Student Survey as a major strength, with the provider performing significantly above the sector average
- a thriving research culture promoting artistic innovation, exploration, and self reflection, including hosting a world leading centre for performance science. Researchers contribute to the core curriculum through research informed teaching
- an ethos of inquiry based learning and learning from expert researchers as role models is woven into curriculum design at all levels
- the music history curriculum is taught by active musicologists, and the provider is one of the only UK institutions to offer music students the opportunity to be taught through its onsite museum and extensive collections
- widespread partnerships with external international musicians and organisations mean the provider is a leading training and research centre for the performing arts. This includes public facing concerts such as the virtual conservatoire project, and the global audition training programme, among others.

The panel considered that the provider sets out a coherent and effective approach, to ensure its mix of students directly benefit from consistently excellent research, professional practice and employer engagement.

Looking at all the evidence, the panel judged the provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to an outstanding academic experience for its students.

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

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The provider submission includes evidence, such as:

- a broad programme of staff development days and engagement with the AdvanceHE fellowship scheme
- creating online resources to support staff in teaching, student support and innovation
- hourly paid staff are given opportunities to enhance their teaching practice formally and informally through teacher cafes, which share good practice
- a development fund to help staff access additional training and conferences for professional development
- hourly paid professors are also paid to attend training courses in mental health awareness, unconscious bias and active bystander training.

Overall, the panel found there is very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted across the provider, consistent with a very high quality feature.

## **Learning environment and academic support**

The panel found this feature to be outstanding quality.

The indicator shows for full-time students there is initial evidence that 'academic support' is either very high or outstanding quality, although the data could not provide certainty on which rating applies.

The provider submission outlined further evidence of outstanding quality, including:

- the high staff to student ratio and the overall small size of the provider lead to outstanding student support. Small group and one-to-one teaching mean disengaged students can be identified quickly and referred for support with the provider's welfare team
- offering a dedicated English language tutor who runs classes in academic and conversational English for international students who need additional support
- a very good understanding of the support and wellbeing needs of students across the student journey, including offering a healthy conservatoires network for specialised support in health and wellbeing for musicians
- a fundraising campaign led to an extended scholarship programme of more than £3.7 million a year, supporting 60 per cent of the most talented students.

Looking at the evidence overall, the panel concluded 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 found this feature to be outstanding.

The indicator showed that for full-time students there is strong evidence that 'learning resources' are outstanding quality.

The provider and student submissions added evidence, including:

- specialist facilities to help students develop familiarity with professional music environments, such as concert halls, performance spaces, broadcast studios, and fully equipped practice rooms
- students have access to a range of specialist and orchestral doubling instruments, including historical performance instruments and a substantial collection of string instruments



- providing students with extensive access to ebooks, journals, and dictionaries, along with comprehensive audio and video recordings from Naxos music library, and the Berlin Philharmonic digital concert hall, among others
- a world leading use of technology to share performances and classes. During coronavirus, the college presented a programme of online events through its YouTube channel and commercial partners
- using video recording technology in all venues, giving students one touch tools to document practice and performance and produce high quality video recordings for assessment, competition entries, and promotional purposes.

The panel noted that the evidence shows that learning resources that are constantly expanded and updated to remain relevant for the needs of its students.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel found that overall, the panel concluded that physical and virtual learning resources are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning across the provider.

### **Student engagement in improvement**

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

The indicator shows that there is very strong evidence that 'student voice' is not very high quality for full-time students.

The provider submission adds evidence, for example:

- the role of student representatives for each instrument family
- how the students' union is structured and has representation on governance committees
- a termly student curriculum forum which is the main route for students to discuss their learning experience.

The panel noted both submissions suggest the not very high quality indicator data is due to the individualised nature of its provision, which means some students are engaged in their academic studies, rather than community activities and student voice. However, the panel noted that the participation rate for the National Student Survey is in line with the sector average response rate.

The panel also considered comments in the student submission on the student voice, which noted that most faculty representatives believe student voice shapes the course, whereas a students' union focus group was split on this issue. The panel considered this to show that there are processes and routes for students to engage with its students but there is not strong evidence that these routes are not embedded .

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel therefore concluded that there is insufficient evidence that the provider effectively engages with its students to lead to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students. Therefore it could not judge this feature as very high 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 student outcomes are typically outstanding quality. Across the aspect the panel found:

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

The panel applied the criteria using its expert judgement and considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Gold'. This is because most features are outstanding quality for all groups of students, consistent with a rating of 'Gold'.

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 showed evidence of outstanding quality, including:

- an in-depth understanding of its students and their specialised journey and careers, reflected in the outstanding completion and progression indicators
- a personalised approach to student education, training, support and wellbeing
- supporting portfolio careers with a high level of choice and flexibility in the curriculum
- schemes that allow students to undertake work experience with professional orchestras
- a high number of graduates progress to postgraduate study at the college or other conservatoires and universities
- the creative careers centre offers a range of services to support students including:
  - bespoke advice, workshops and presentations by industry specialists, and a broad range of professional opportunities including performances and teaching work
  - coordinating services which provide opportunities for students to earn money and gain experience in their field, including an in-house agency which negotiates and handles fees, enabling students to perform across world famous venues

- supporting graduating students to launch their careers by providing grant funding and mentoring support.

Looking at all the evidence in the round, the panel concluded that the provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies. This is consistent with an outstanding quality feature.

### **Continuation and completion rates**

The panel considered this feature to be outstanding.

The indicators showed that for full-time students:

- there is compelling evidence that ‘continuation’ is outstanding quality
- there is initial evidence that ‘completion’ is either very high or outstanding quality, although the data could not provide certainty.

The panel found the exceptional rates of continuation and completion apply across the provider’s diverse student population on the single subject. It considered that the outstanding outcomes are due to a combination of factors, including the very high quality of teaching, the outstanding academic support tailored to student needs, and the wide range of professional opportunities offered by the provider.

Overall, the panel concluded there are outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider’s students.

### **Progression rates**

The panel found this feature to be outstanding.

The indicators showed that for full-time students there is strong evidence that ‘progression’ is outstanding.

The panel noted that this applies to all the provider’s groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups. The panel considered the provider has a strong focus on supporting its students and graduates to develop successful careers in music, both through the quality of its teaching and the range of professional opportunities offered.

Looking at all the evidence, the panel concluded that there are outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider’s students.

### **Intended educational gains**

The panel found this feature outstanding.

The provider submission showed evidence of outstanding quality, including:

- how educational gains are set out in all of the provider handbooks. Its critical aims of producing graduates who are equipped and skilled for long term careers in classical music across the world is clearly articulated to students

- the student submission highlights the importance preparing for a wide range of portfolio careers. Rather than one ideal musician profile that students pursue, there are a range of career options defined by the choices students make during their studies
- students are taught to be independent, entrepreneurial, professional, and creative across all years of study, and to forge their own professional path.

Overall, the panel found that the provider clearly articulates the range educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to its students and their future ambitions. This is consistent with an outstanding quality feature.

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

The panel considered this feature to be outstanding quality.

The provider submission showed evidence of outstanding quality, including:

- a programme structure based on small group and one to one tuition, and intensive public performance work, prepares students for achieving the intended educational gains
- the programme design prepares graduates for a diverse range of careers in the performing arts
- the provider's ethos develops students to have the confidence to shape their own musical career, with the creative careers centre supporting them in this
- offering an accelerate grant to final year students who can apply and receive funding for a professional project such as recording an album, curating a concert, or establishing an ensemble or teaching service. These are selected in a pitch contest to a panel of experts.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel found 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. This is consistent with an outstanding quality feature.

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

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

The panel noted graduate outcomes are measured as a proxy for the evaluating educational gains, which shows student success is clear. However, there was a lack of evidence for developed measures for evaluating educational gains.

Overall, the panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence the provider evaluates the gains made by its students. However, in line with TEF guidance, the panel treated this feature neutrally when looking at the student outcomes aspect as a whole.

## Overall: Gold

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

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

The panel considered the outstanding and very high quality features apply to all the provider's groups of students. This includes those from underrepresented groups which make up a high proportion of the provider's students.

In judging 'Gold' as the best fit, the panel considered all the evidence and concluded there is typically outstanding quality provision for all groups of students and courses. This is consistent with a rating of 'Gold'.