



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

The University of Surrey

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at The University of Surrey 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:

- teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting students' learning, progression, and attainment
- course content and delivery that encourages students to engage in their learning, and stretches them to develop their knowledge and skills
- the use of research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional 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.

There are also some outstanding quality features:

- a supportive learning environment in which students have access to a readily available range of outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs
- physical and virtual learning resources that are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning
- effective engagement with students, leading to continuous improvements to their experiences and outcomes.

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
- the provider's articulation of the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students
- effective support for students to achieve the intended educational gains
- the evaluation of the gains made by students.

There are also some outstanding quality features:

- the provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in supporting its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

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 Surrey is a medium-sized provider with approximately 15,500 full-time students in 2020-21, including around 12,500 studying undergraduate programmes.

The provider submission states that its total student numbers have reduced across the TEF period, aligning with its strategic decisions to rebalance subjects and focus on the quality of delivery. The panel also noted that there have been increases in the percentages of UK domiciled students from ethnic minorities and disabled students.

Provision is spread across a wide range of subjects, with Business and Management (21 per cent) and Engineering (13 per cent) accounting for the largest proportions of full-time undergraduate students, and Nursing and Midwifery (37.5 per cent) and Allied Health (28.8 per cent) accounting for the largest proportions of part-time students.

The assessment considered information about the provider's undergraduate courses and students on those courses. While the provider has transnational education provision and validated-only courses, neither were included in their submission and so these were not considered in scope of this assessment.

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: 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.

The panel found the student experience is typically very high quality for the provider's mix of students and courses.

Across the student experience aspect, the panel found:

- four features to be very high quality
- three outstanding quality features.

The panel judged that the evidence overall covered most of the provider's student groups and subjects, but considered that for some features the evidence relating to particular groups of students or subjects in lower-performing areas was limited, for example, 'assessment and feedback' for black students and 'student voice' for Law and Medical Sciences students. The panel noted that students who reported a disability have an outstanding experience across all five indicators of the student experience.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and considered the best fit rating to be 'Silver'. This is because all features of the student experience aspect are at least very high quality for most groups of students. The panel did not consider 'Gold' to be the best fit because only 'some' of the features were of outstanding quality, rather than 'most' of the features.

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

Teaching, assessment, and feedback

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

The overall 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' indicators for full-time students both provided initial evidence of a very high quality feature. At the 'split' indicator level, there was evidence of either very high or outstanding quality across most student groups and subjects. However the panel noted some variability for 'assessment and feedback', with indicators for black students and non-UK domiciled students, as well as some subject areas (Business and Management, Computing, Law, Allied Health and Medical Sciences) showing evidence of performance below the level of very high quality.

The provider submission describes teaching, assessment and feedback approaches that are tailored to its students and its subjects. Although the provider submission does not comment specifically on all the variations in the indicators, there was evidence that particular initiatives may have had significant impact in enhancing the teaching, assessment and feedback for these groups of students.

The submission included evidence that these approaches are effective in supporting students' progression and attainment, and encouraging students' engagement in their learning, including:

- an innovative toolkit and tracking system leading to improved assessment and feedback scores
- a 'continuous' enhancement review and plan enabling the provider to quickly make progress to add value to the student outcomes and experience
- several award schemes that provide stretch and recognition for student achievement and engagement.

The student submission comments on the marginalisation of underrepresented student groups and the need for the provider to prevent this worsening. The submission also notes the joint inclusive education agenda work the provider and the students' union are doing, but limited evidence of impact was described. The student submission acknowledges the work done and students' appreciation of assessment, but notes that further work is needed to improve feedback, and the need to ensure the benefits of personal tutoring are recognised by all students.

Taking all of the evidence into account, 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, and that this is therefore a very high quality feature. The panel did not judge the feature to be outstanding because it considered that over the whole TEF period there was insufficient evidence that practices were highly effective and tailored to all groups of students.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

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

The 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' indicators for full-time students, as described in the feature above, provided initial evidence of a very high quality feature.

The evidence in the provider and student submissions included:

- a notable increase in the overall satisfaction of 'teaching on my course' over the four-year assessment period to 83.4 per cent in the 2022 National Student Survey (NSS). In addition, overall satisfaction in the 'Learning Opportunities' section of the same survey was at 82.5%
- initiation of a Curriculum Design Review in 2019-20 to ensure that course content exposes students to intentionally challenging concepts or problems in order to develop their knowledge and skills to their full potential
- the student submission indicated that student survey responses show consistently high scores for teaching content and course quality.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider's course content and delivery effectively encourage the provider's students to engage in their learning, and stretch students to develop knowledge and skills. Therefore the panel considered this to be a very high quality feature.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

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

The provider submission indicates that there is widespread embedding of research, innovation and stakeholder engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for its students.

The evidence included:

- high levels of student appreciation for course content, for example with 86 per cent of students agreeing their 'course is intellectually stimulating' in the 2022 NSS
- case studies on how staff use research evidence to develop their teaching to benefit students
- that 68 per cent of students are on professionally-accredited courses. Several Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies have recently commended the provider's strong links with industry.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel concluded that the provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for its students, and that this is therefore a very high quality feature. The panel did not judge the feature to be outstanding because it considered there was limited evidence relating to the impact of policies and practices for all groups of students.

Staff professional development and academic practice

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

The provider submission described many examples of how staff are supported with their professional development, including:

- the Institute of Education's central role across teaching, learning, and assessment activities
- a variety of routes for staff to achieve professional qualifications and recognition for their teaching that are tailored to all staff
- professional development workshops, showcases and provision of resources.

The provider submission indicates a clear commitment to equipping academic staff with the necessary skills to optimally support students who struggle with mental health and other extenuating circumstances. This commitment is supported by the student submission, which noted the successful implementation of personal tutor training initiatives and the appointment of seven senior personal tutors. This has led to a noticeable improvement in staff sentiment and a greater awareness of the impact of mental health and personal circumstances on students' academic achievement. However, the student submission also pointed out that these principles could be ingrained further across all areas of the academic framework.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider offers very high quality support for staff professional development and that excellent academic practice is promoted. Hence, the panel considered this a very high quality feature.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The 'academic support' indicator provided initial evidence of an outstanding quality feature. This was the case across most student groups and courses. The panel noted less strong performance for black students and Computing students, although there was limited certainty in the data.

The provider submission demonstrated its understanding of the support and wellbeing needs of its students and the embedding of a range of appropriate activities across its provision. However, there was no commentary on the relatively lower indicators for black students or Computing students.

Other evidence in the provider submission included:

- a new 'Student Success Team' dedicated to identifying students in need of support
- a peer academic writing scheme and a peer assisted learning scheme, developed in partnership with students. Level 3-5 students are assigned to a personal, fully trained student mentor. The scheme reaches out to students who may not traditionally be contacted about specific learning opportunities, such as care experienced students, estranged students, students from low-income families, students with a disability, and ethnic minority students. It also develops Level 6 students' mentoring skills.

Considering the indicator and submission evidence overall, the panel concluded that the provider ensures a supportive learning environment, and its students have access to a readily available range of outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs. The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Learning resources

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The 'learning resources' indicator provided initial evidence of an outstanding quality feature, and this was reflected across almost all student groups and courses.

This is also an improving trend, with learning resources scoring 87.6 per cent in the 2022 NSS, a rise from 85 per cent in the 2019 NSS.

The student submission provided additional quantitative evidence on the provider's outstanding learning resources. For example, the 'Library and Learning Resource' scored 97 per cent satisfaction in the 2021-22 Pulse survey.

The student submission indicates that the students' union has a strong collaborative partnership with the library leadership team and that students are able to directly influence the provision of learning resources.

The provider submission offers details of a recent £350m investment in physical and virtual learning spaces to meet the needs of a changing student population and increased range of programmes. For example, a bespoke new construction to accommodate Veterinary Medicine and

the purchase and refurbishment of existing buildings to relocate Health Sciences, among other examples.

Overall, the panel concluded that this is an outstanding quality feature as physical and virtual learning resources are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The overall 'student voice' indicator provided initial evidence of at least a very high quality feature. This was broadly consistent across student groups and courses, with the exception of Law and Medical Sciences which showed evidence of performance below the level of very high quality.

The provider's submission indicates that it has embedded student engagement, leading to continuous improvement to student experiences and outcomes. The evidence included:

- the use of surveys to closely monitor student experience and to inform enhancement activities. The success of their approaches is evidenced in the Pulse survey question 'Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?', which scored 89 per cent in 2019-20, dropped in 2020-21, during the coronavirus pandemic, to 78 per cent, and rose back to 87 per cent in 2021-22
- how the provider and the students have policies and mechanisms for working together
- the role of the students' union in student voice and representation of students' views. The high student satisfaction with students' union representation is also noted in the student submission
- specific work undertaken to support ethnic minority student attainment.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to continuous improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students. Hence, the panel considered this to be an outstanding 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 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:

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

The panel applied the ratings criteria and considered the best fit rating to be 'Silver'. This is because all features of the student outcomes aspect are at least very high quality for most groups of students. The panel did not consider 'Gold' to be the best fit because it did not conclude that either 'all' or 'most' of the features are of outstanding quality.

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

Approaches to supporting student success

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission demonstrates a solid understanding of students' needs and describes strategies that are tailored towards enhancing student outcomes. The evidence included:

- use of internal data and learning analytics to foster continual improvement. However, the student submission presented mixed responses towards this learning analytics platform and called for more consistent promotion of this platform by academic staff
- a 'Student Success' team focused on bolstering student retention and completion
- a professional training year and placement that impacts more than two-thirds of the student population
- effective engagement with employers, professional bodies and industry advisory boards to facilitate successful student progression
- an extensive range of other policies and practices to support students' success including summer internship programmes, the Graduate Futures Programme, Global Graduate Award, and the Student Enterprise Programme.

Overall, taking all of the evidence into consideration, the panel concluded that the provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in supporting its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies, and that this is therefore an outstanding quality feature.

Continuation and completion rates

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

The 'continuation' and 'completion' indicators provided evidence of a very high quality feature.

For the 'continuation' indicator, most student groups and subjects also show evidence of very high quality. The exceptions are non-UK domiciled students, Business and Management and Performing Arts which show evidence of outstanding quality, and Politics, which shows evidence of performance below the level of very high quality.

For the 'completion' indicator, most student groups and courses show evidence of very high quality. For students between 21-30 years old there is evidence of outstanding quality.

Overall, the panel concluded that there are very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses, and therefore that this is a very high quality feature.

Progression rates

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The 'progression' indicator provided initial evidence of an outstanding quality feature, and this applied to most student groups and subjects.

The provider's submission and student progression indicator demonstrate the provider's core strength in practice-based education and employability. The provider achieved outstanding progression through professional body and industry placements, where 68 per cent of its students are on accredited degrees and 60 per cent of students are undertaking a placement year. This has been further evidenced by the provider winning various external education awards.

The panel concluded that there was evidence of outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

Intended educational gains

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

The provider has established five 'graduate attributes' as the desired educational gains and aims to integrate them into every program and at every level through an ongoing 'Curriculum Design Review' process.

In addition, the provider presents a more compelling definition of educational gain by comparing employability against entry criteria, for example the provider demonstrates significantly better graduate outcomes than would be expected based on the qualifications students enter with (their 'entry tariff'). This is supported by its graduate outcomes ranking surpassing that of its student entry tariffs. The panel found this evidence-based definition to be more robust than the one based solely on the five graduate attributes.

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. Therefore, the panel considered this to be a very high quality feature.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

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

The provider has highlighted its ongoing efforts in conducting a comprehensive curriculum review aimed at integrating its five graduate attributes, which will serve as a framework for educational gains in the future.

With the intention of enhancing their programmes, the panel noted that the provider is actively redesigning its curriculum and ensuring the incorporation of these attributes at each level.

Although the provider submission presented limited evidence of impact beyond the underpinning teaching theories, the panel considered it evident that the provider has displayed a strong commitment to its goals by clearly outlining the teaching theories guiding their curriculum review and how it effectively supports students in achieving the desired educational gains.

The panel therefore concluded there was sufficient evidence that the provider effectively supports its students to achieve the intended educational gains, and that this is a very high quality feature.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

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

To ensure educational gains, the provider has incorporated five graduate attributes into each program and at every level through an ongoing 'Curriculum Design Review'. However, since the programs that underwent this review are still delivering to their initial cohorts, the evaluation of these specific educational gains is not yet available.

Notably, the provider presents an additional definition of educational gain that focuses on employability in relation to entry criteria. The panel noted that the provider's graduate outcomes ranking surpasses that of its student entry tariffs, indicating significantly better graduate outcomes than expected. This evidence-based articulation provides a more convincing perspective on educational gains compared to the definition based solely on the five attributes.

Overall, the panel came to the conclusion that the provider evaluates the gains made by its students, and that this is a very high quality feature.

Overall: Silver

The panel considered the overall rating to be 'Silver'.

The panel considered the student experience aspect rating to be 'Silver' and the student outcomes aspect rating to be 'Silver', and it noted the guidance that a 'Silver' overall rating would be awarded if the panel awards a 'Silver' rating to both aspects.

In reaching this judgement the panel did note that it had found some outstanding quality features in both the student experience aspect and the student outcomes aspect, such as outstanding learning resources, and progression rates.