



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

## **TEF 2023 panel statement**

**The Royal Veterinary College**

# Summary of outcomes

## Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at The Royal Veterinary College 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:

- course content and delivery effectively encourage students to engage in their learning, and stretch students to develop their knowledge and skills
- 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 the promotion of excellent academic practice
- effective use of physical and virtual learning resources to support very high quality teaching and learning.

### Student outcomes: Gold

Student outcomes are typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- tailoring approaches to ensure that students succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses
- outstanding rates of successful progression
- articulation of the range of educational gains the provider intends its students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to future ambitions
- approaches to supporting its students to achieve educational gains are evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to its students and their different starting points.

There is also one very high quality feature:

- students are succeeding in developing their professional skills.

# 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

This is a small and specialist provider with around 2,000 full-time students who are undergraduates, with a small amount of growth over the TEF period. The panel noted that around 75 per cent of these are studying undergraduate courses with postgraduate components.

For completeness, there are a small number of postgraduate taught students (around 120), and also some part-time students (around 300) with most of these studying credit or modules only. Part-time student data has either been suppressed for data protection reasons (because the headcount is two or fewer) or otherwise is not applicable to this population, therefore only data for full-time students and their associated indicators are considered throughout this assessment.

In 2020-21, the data for full-time students showed that 64.8 per cent are under 21 years on entry (with 33.2 per cent being between 21 to 30 years on entry). It also showed that most (60.1 per cent) are white, and female (81.8 per cent).

Some (32.2 per cent) students had a higher education-level qualification on entry, with most students not local on entry, and most with A-levels of grades BCC and above.

Full-time undergraduates study veterinary sciences (83 per cent), agriculture, food and related studies (9 per cent) and biosciences (8 per cent), with the provider submission stating that 60 per cent of the students study veterinary medicine, 25 per cent biosciences and 15 per cent veterinary nursing.

The provider's mission is to be 'the leading international authority in education, clinical care, research, expert opinion, and employment in veterinary and biomedical sciences'. It was recognised as a 'world leading specialist provider' by the OfS in 2022. All the programmes which the provider offers are accredited.

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/](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: 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 weighed up all the evidence relating to the student experience aspect as a whole and determined its rating to be 'Silver'.

It then considered the extent to which there are very high quality and outstanding quality features and how far these features apply across all the provider's student groups and the range of its courses and subjects.

It found:

- four features to be very high quality
- for two features there was insufficient evidence of very high quality, although the panel noted that they did contain elements of very high quality practices
- insufficient evidence that one feature was very high quality.

The panel judged there to be compelling evidence that the very high quality features apply to all the provider's groups of students and for all courses and subjects.

The panel noted that approaches are adopted across the whole provider, with certain interventions targeted at specific groups, including underrepresented groups.

It considered the best fit rating to be 'Silver' because 'most features of the aspect are very high quality for all groups of students'. The panel carefully considered whether 'Bronze' for this aspect would be the most appropriate rating given that three of the features did not contain sufficient evidence of very high quality, but, on balance, the panel felt that the evidence demonstrated that 'most' rather than 'some' of the student experience features are very high quality.

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

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

The panel considered overall there to be insufficient evidence of a very high quality feature, although it noted some very high quality practices.

The overall indicator for 'teaching on my course' provides compelling evidence of very high quality, and that this is the case for most student groups and subjects.

The overall indicator for 'assessment and feedback' provides compelling evidence of below very high quality, for most student groups and subjects. However, there is evidence of an improving trajectory from year 1 to year 4.

Evidence in the provider submission includes:

- that skills teaching is core to all curricula within the specialist provider and the mission offers a commitment to enhance the student experience and prepare students for their future careers
- there is an emphasis on learning practical skills for professional practice and there is evidence that students engage in different types of assessment
- the approach to assessment is necessarily rigorous, and new resources have been developed to help students engage with the grading criteria
- there is also some commentary about how teaching changed in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The student submission is generally positive about the teaching quality and the experience of students with assessment and feedback, but there was some evidence of variation in relation to teaching and assessment across cohorts.

The panel concluded that there was limited evidence that effective teaching, assessment and feedback practices are embedded across the provider (noting that the indicators contributed to no more than half of the evidence of excellence). This meant that it considered there to be insufficient evidence to demonstrate a very high quality feature, although the panel noted that there was some evidence of very high quality teaching practices and evidence of year-on-year improvement for assessment and feedback.

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

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

This section of the provider submission for this feature is relatively brief and there is limited evidence of opportunities for stretch provided within all courses. The panel noted that all programmes followed a strict curriculum with appropriate content recognised by the professional bodies. There is also an appropriate emphasis on the development of practical skills across the programmes, and of learning in the workplace.

Overall, the panel found that there is sufficient 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.

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

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

The provider submission mentions that teaching is research-led and that students can participate in research. There is also mention of academic staff being research active. This is corroborated in the student submission, which mentions that research is integrated throughout some programmes, and this provides the opportunity to interact with postgraduate research students and early career researchers who mentor and offer support.

All students train in research methods and conduct research projects which have resulted in several publications. There are some good examples of exposure to practitioners both in and

outside of the institution, but the panel found limited evidence of the effectiveness and impact of such activities on the overall academic experience.

Weighing up all the evidence, the panel judged 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.

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

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

The provider submission gives information about an internal qualification (PGCert VetEd) which is compulsory for new academics.

Other evidence includes:

- 45 per cent of teaching staff hold a teaching qualification (which is above the sector average)
- the percentage of academic staff who are advance higher education fellows has increased year-on-year
- staff engage with the educational development team through attendance at workshops with around 65 per cent of staff attending one or more of the 31 workshops in 2020-21.

Overall, the panel concluded that there is sufficient evidence of very high quality support for staff professional development and the promotion of excellent academic practice.

### **Learning environment and academic support**

The panel considered overall there to be insufficient evidence of a very high quality feature.

The overall indicator for 'academic support' provides compelling evidence of below very high quality. The provider submission attributes this to the coronavirus pandemic and mentions the various tutors which students encounter, although this section of the narrative does not provide further insight into the indicator data.

The provider submission reports some evidence of improvements in satisfaction post-coronavirus, reporting that dissatisfaction during the coronavirus pandemic was because of the practical nature of some disciplines that were adversely affected.

The student submission indicates that there was dissatisfaction among the Biosciences students who were prohibited from returning until much later than other students due to government guidance.

There is reliance on work placements, and it is highlighted that this can give rise to financial pressures, so the provider continues to increase the amount of funding available to support students.

The student submission provides examples of academic support including study skills opportunities and digital skills training, as well as a 24/7 online support system for written assignments.

The panel concluded that overall, there is not sufficient evidence that the provider fosters a supportive learning environment, or that its students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support.

## **Learning resources**

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

The overall indicator for 'learning resources' provides strong evidence of very high quality, although there is some variation between different student groups and subjects.

Evidence from both submissions includes:

- the provider submission describes recent investment in physical educational spaces such as a £15 million new student centre at the Camden campus and a £43 million investment at another campus, which is soon to be completed – although the impact of this is not yet known
- the learning resource centre was open 24/7 during the coronavirus pandemic to meet the needs of students in different time zones
- a recent combined international accreditation recognised the provider's facilities as among the 'most diverse and the best in the world'
- the student submission notes how valuable the virtual learning environment and other digital learning resources are and how they complement the physical learning spaces.

The panel judged that overall there is sufficient evidence of physical and virtual learning resources being used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning.

## **Student engagement in improvement**

The panel considered overall there to be insufficient evidence of a very high quality feature, although noted some very high quality practices.

The overall indicator for 'student voice' provides compelling evidence of below very high quality, for most of its groups and courses.

The provider submission acknowledges this data, and the provider has developed a new student voice strategy, but there is little explanation of the data, and the impact of the new strategy is not yet known.

There is little evidence that the provider is acting on feedback, and this is also mentioned considerably within the student submission. The provider submission indicates that the scores for 'staff value students views and opinions about the course' and 'It is clear how students' feedback has been acted on' are both low.

The provider concludes that this is not because of a lack of feedback opportunities, but a lack of knowledge about how student feedback is acted on.



The students' union is working with the provider to proactively develop communications to enhance the student voice, and there are a number of examples of very high quality practice described, particularly linked to the strategy moving forwards.

Overall, the panel concluded that there is limited evidence that the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to continuous improvement to the experiences and outcomes of its students.

## **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 weighed up all the evidence in the indicators and the submissions relating to the student outcomes aspect as a whole and determined its rating to be 'Gold'.

The panel then considered the extent to which there are very high quality and outstanding features across the aspect, and how far these features apply across the provider's student groups and the range of its courses and subjects.

It found:

- five of the features to be outstanding quality
- one feature to be very high quality
- evidence of outstanding student outcomes across the aspect as a whole.

The panel judged there to be compelling evidence that the outstanding features apply to all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups.

The panel considered the best fit rating to be 'Gold' because 'most features are outstanding quality for all groups of students' (noting that the panel considered these features to be at least very high quality for all students). The panel did not think that 'Silver' would be the best fit because the evidence demonstrates that almost all features are outstanding quality rather than very high quality for this aspect.

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 provides evidence of several initiatives to support students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies. There is an emphasis on students developing the required skills to become competent practitioners in their chosen profession and to flourish in their careers.

Evidence which was identified as providing evidence of outstanding quality includes:

- support in the first six weeks of joining the provider to ensure effective transition to higher education – this has been identified as key to continuation on the course
- developing a skills-based approach to support the transition to higher education
- establishing a pre-arrival programme (KickStart) which is also praised in the student submission, and which has received positive initial feedback
- the student performance and development policy, which aims to support students to overcome barriers to achieve their academic and professional goals
- tailoring approaches to ensure all students can succeed.

Weighing up all the evidence, the panel found that the provider deploys and tailors its approaches to ensure that students succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

### **Continuation and completion rates**

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The overall indicator for 'continuation' provides initial compelling evidence of very high quality.

For 'completion', the indicator provides initial compelling evidence of very high quality for full-time students and outstanding quality for part-time students.

The indicator values for 'continuation' and 'completion' are both flagged as 'high' in the TEF data dashboard, suggesting outstanding quality. The panel considered the indicators and the evidence from the submissions which provide evidence of outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

### **Progression rates**

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The overall indicator for 'progression' provides very strong evidence of very high quality, and that these outcomes are reflective of all student characteristics. However, the panel noted that for the largest cohort, the indicator provides evidence that there is outstanding quality in the rates of progression for a majority of students, as well as for 'other graduates'.

The provider submission notes that most students are studying vocational courses with embedded placements and are gaining real life work experiences. It also details a range of employability interventions linked to career planning and preparation for work.

The panel judged that overall, there is evidence of 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 has developed its own definition for educational gains which is clearly articulated and has also been adopted by the students' union. This relates to the gains students make as they get the skills that they need to succeed and flourish while studying at university and subsequently pursuing their careers.

Skills articulated by the provider in the submission include study skills, practical and clinical skills, research skills, lifelong learning skills, and employability skills.

The student submission discusses the importance of work-based learning in supporting students to make educational gains. This is complemented by careers guidance and work readiness within its programmes to enhance employability and personal development.

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

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

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission details how the careers service supports students to progress into employment and how they have fully embedded work readiness in degree programmes. The focus is on essential professional skills developments and co-curricular development as measures of education gain in their specialist context.

The Miller's Pyramid (a framework for assessing clinical competence) for skills development is described in detail in the submission and is evidenced appropriately.

The panel therefore judged that the provider's approaches to supporting its students to achieve educational 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 a very high quality feature.

The provider submission includes evidence of a progression in confidence of clinical students between the cohort of 2021 and 2022 graduates. The provider has also pioneered many aspects of skills development and assessment. The provider therefore concludes that 'formative and summative assessment of similar skills allows clear objective demonstration of educational gain'.

The panel considered the evidence of how the provider evaluates the gains made by its students based on the reflective cycles (reflection, planning and action, and evaluation) and that it was able to demonstrate that its students are succeeding in developing their professional skills.

The panel also noted future plans to progress the provider's approach to skills development by the introduction of e-portfolios during clinical training and the introduction of 'Careers Registration' to track career planning and allow more tailored support for students.

## Overall: Silver

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

The panel considered the student experience aspect rating to be 'Silver' and the student outcomes aspect rating to be 'Gold'. The panel weighed these two aspects equally and considered all the evidence across all features and across all the provider's student groups, subject and courses to come to a 'best fit' decision overall.

In reaching this decision, the panel considered there to be compelling evidence that the outstanding and very high quality features apply to all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups. The panel considered the contextual factors of the provider throughout its assessment of all the evidence.

The panel carefully considered whether to award a 'Silver' or a 'Gold' rating for this provider. The fact that the 'Silver'-rated student experience aspect did not contain any outstanding features meant that the panel was unable to award a 'Gold' rating overall, given that the 'Silver'-rated aspect needs to include outstanding features', which was not the case.

Therefore, 'Silver' was judged to be the best fit overall as it was judged that across all the available evidence the student experience and student outcomes are typically a combination of very high quality for all groups of students and courses.