



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

## **Summary TEF 2023 panel statement**

**University of York**

# Summary of outcomes

## Overall: Gold

Typically, the experience students have at the University of York 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
- outstanding support for staff professional development with embedded, excellent academic practice.

There are also some very high quality features including:

- a supportive learning environment, where students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support
- effective engagement with students, leading to improvements to their experiences and outcomes.

### Student outcomes: Silver

Student outcomes are typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- very high rates of successful progression for students
- the articulation of the educational gains intended for students to achieve, and why these are relevant to students
- effective support for students to achieve educational gains
- evaluation of the gains made by students.

There are also some outstanding quality features including:

- tailored approaches that are highly effective in ensuring students succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- outstanding rates of continuation and completion for 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 York has an educational mission focusing on the pursuit of academic excellence, the application of learning for social benefit, and equality of opportunity. The three key aims in its education strategy are to be one of the UK's most socially diverse research-intensive universities, to create an inclusive learning environment and to reduce barriers to student success, enabling all students to reach their true potential.

The provider is medium sized, with around 14,510 full-time and 2,850 part-time undergraduate students in the academic year 2020-21. There are also small number of undergraduate apprenticeships. The most popular subjects are Biosciences (7.5 per cent), followed by Business and Management (7.8 per cent).

Of the students studying at the provider, 20.9 per cent have a disability, while 18.1 per cent are from the most disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. 15 per cent of its students are international and 21.5 per cent are from an ethnic minority background. Students primarily have high entry A-Level qualifications and their age on entry is mostly under 21.

The assessment considered information about the provider's undergraduate courses and students on those courses. This includes validated-only courses, modules or credit-bearing courses that do not lead to the award of a qualification and apprenticeships at undergraduate level.

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:

- most features are outstanding
- two features are 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 most features of the aspect are outstanding for most groups of students, 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 is outstanding.

The indicators showed that for full-time students there is compelling evidence that both 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' are very high quality.

The provider and student submissions add further evidence of an outstanding feature, including:

- key approaches include small group teaching, embedding research throughout all programmes, and working with sector partners locally, nationally and internationally to ensure skills can be applied after graduation
- a 'York Pedagogy' informs teaching and assessment, with National Student Survey results and internal evidence showing teaching is typically outstanding
- the student submission highlights that the range of teaching and assessment approaches enables students to thrive, regardless of their background or learning style
- an evaluation method which uses assessment data, student questionnaires and focus groups, to improve the pattern, volume and alignment of assessment and feedback
- offering students a clash-free timetable
- changing academic regulations during coronavirus to support and protect students' assessment practices and outcomes.

The panel noted all the examples provided in the submissions, including good practice such as innovative cross disciplinary modules and inclusive assessment and research projects across levels of study.

Considering the indicators alongside the evidence in the submissions, 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:

- comments in the student submission that students look for innovative delivery of course content when discussing excellence, highlighting above sector average national student survey scores on staff making the subject interesting and courses being intellectually stimulating
- national student survey results repeatedly show a key strength is that staff deliver subject content that encourages students to engage with complex topics
- frequently offering additional modules which provide opportunities to engage with areas of knowledge that students may not have covered in previous education
- consistently applying course content and delivery practices across courses and effectively tailoring them to support students through innovative teaching
- supporting academic societies to develop student interests in their subject material and help them feel part of an academic community in which they can thrive.

The panel noted many examples of excellent practice, and considered these alongside the indicators and the provider's narrative evidence.

Overall the panel concluded there is compelling evidence that course content and delivery inspire the provider's 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 of outstanding practice, such as:

- students benefit from being taught by research active staff and research is embedded throughout its programmes. This includes capstone research or service related projects across all bachelors and integrated masters courses
- multiple examples of applied learning which connects students with the workplace and real world challenges. The student submission confirms students are actively encouraged to take part in employability activities embedded within their courses

- a wide range of employer and partner engagement activities. Among others, these include work placements in an industry of choice, short term paid roles with businesses, practice learning designed with local and regional partners, and problem based learning drawn from real cases
- a careers and placements service works in close partnership with students, academic departments and employers to prepare students for their future careers
- the provider won awards for its employability strategy from the Institute of Student Employers and TargetJobs.

The panel noted the examples of good practice, for example, 'industry of choice' placements and problem-based learning drawn from real cases.

Considering the evidence overall, the panel judged 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 considered this feature to be outstanding.

The provider submission includes outstanding evidence, such as:

- all new teaching staff undertake a PG certificate in academic practice, which leads to fellowship of Advance HE. Four staff have won national teaching fellowships in the last five years
- a scholarship of teaching and learning network supports staff to develop their evidence based practice and scholarship
- an annual learning and teaching conference and other forums provide opportunities to share research and good practice
- a dedicated virtual learning environment site providing highly detailed, guidance on online and hybrid teaching methods for staff
- the accredited York professional and academic development scheme
- additional staff development initiatives such as forum workshops, teaching away days and peer observation cycles.

The panel noted many examples of good practice in the submissions. Considering the evidence holistically, the panel judged there is outstanding support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider.

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

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

The indicator shows for full-time students there is probable evidence that 'academic support' is outstanding quality.

The provider and student submissions outlined further evidence:

- both submissions highlight how every student has a supervisor supporting their academic development and providing welfare support
- peer assisted learning is well-received by students, offering them opportunities to design their own learning in a supportive environment
- an understanding of the particular support needs of students, offering a range of tailored academic support services
- staff in academic departments and central support teams often collaborate to define and deliver programme specific, academic skills resources and sessions
- disability services remain accessible to students who are on placements and offer a smooth transition back into study
- central academic skills support with appointments covering academic writing, mathematics, statistics and numerical reasoning, digital skills and study coaching among others.

Looking at all the evidence, the panel concluded the provider fosters a supportive learning environment, and its students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support.

## **Learning resources**

The panel found this feature to be outstanding.

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

The provider and student submissions added evidence, including:

- students have access to four libraries, and teaching spaces are modern, multi-functional places that support small and large group working
- the student submission highlights some of the specialist learning spaces such as those for Art, Science and Law which mimic professional environments
- for every year since 2019, the provider has outstanding results in the 'learning resources' indicator and has also been in the top quintile of the sector
- the Law School has an interactive law firm that embeds role-play and experiential learning for students
- high quality labs for students on science based degrees, with full teaching days often scheduled in these spaces each week



- multi functional spaces support large group teaching and small group working, with break out spaces so students can work together outside the classroom.

Looking at the evidence overall, the panel found that physical and virtual learning resources are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning.

## **Student engagement in improvement**

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The indicator shows for full-time students there is compelling evidence that 'student voice' is very high quality. However, there is some variation in the quality for different subject areas.

The provider and student submissions add evidence, for example:

- the student submission highlights a collaborative culture with the senior leadership team and students see the formation of a student expert panel a positive reflection of the provider's approach to seeking student feedback
- students have contributed to the development of policies and procedures, such as the creation of a safety net policy and a buddying scheme during the pandemic
- a well established representation network that sees the union recruit, elect and train around 500 students each year to represent student voice at all levels
- policies are debated in the student-led ideas forum, made up of representatives of all different facets of student life at the university
- changes to programmes are carefully communicated and informed by widespread student consultation.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel judged the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students. This is consistent with a very high quality feature.

## **Student outcomes: Silver**

Throughout this section, we refer to indicators. The indicators for continuation, completion and progression rates are based on national data about higher education students. The indicators are 'benchmarked' to show how well the provider performs for its particular mix of students and courses.

The panel found student outcomes are typically very high quality. Across the aspect the panel found:

- most features are very high quality
- two features are outstanding quality.

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

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

### **Approaches to supporting student success**

The panel found this feature to be outstanding.

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

- a suite of tailored supportive activities and events, focused on transitions and building learning community. These include pre-arrival preparation, massive open online courses to engage underrepresented groups, student buddy schemes, and pastoral care
- a central student hub provides one to one advice and support on issues affecting students' progress
- students from different demographics are consistently in line with the very high quality overall indicators
- an internship bureau which offers short term paid roles for students with businesses across the region
- first year students participate in a team exercise responding to an educational challenge pitched by an external NGO, local business or charity.

Looking at all the evidence, the panel considered this feature to be outstanding. It concluded the provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

### **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 compelling evidence that 'completion' is outstanding quality for almost all groups of students.

The panel noted that both the provider and student submissions show examples of activities and initiatives that are effectively supporting students' learning and attainment.

The panel considered the indicators alongside the evidence in the submissions and concluded there are outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

### **Progression rates**

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The indicators showed that for full-time students there is very strong evidence that 'progression' is very high quality for almost all groups of students. The panel noted that 10 of 25 subjects have outstanding progression rates of either 95 per cent or more.

The provider and student submission describe further evidence, including:

- the application of real-world learning combined with wider student support tailored to student needs, such as the York futures scholarships and the opportunities available through the providers' student employability strategy
- the student submission highlights the 'York award' and 'York strengths programme' which enables first year students to identify their employability traits using self reflection.

While assessing the evidence, the panel took into consideration additional comments in the provider submission on factors that may have influenced the indicators.

Looking at all the evidence holistically, the panel concluded there are very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses. This is consistent with a very high quality feature.

### **Intended educational gains**

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The panel noted that the university emphasises a programme-specific approach to educational gain based on clearly defined programme level outcomes. The provider describes these as concise, stretching, future focused and discipline specific statements of educational gain, informed by consultation with employers. They are intended to give students clear statements of the disciplinary and transferable skills they will develop that are relevant to their context and future ambitions.

The panel considered that the provider's conception of educational gains as being wholly embedded into programme specific outcomes meant that there was limited discussion of the wider gains achieved through extra curricular experiences. However, it noted that these outcomes have been informed by employers and cover the skills students will develop.

The panel also noted additional evidence that each programme is mapped to ensure that student work, contact time and assessment for each module contribute to the progressive achievement of the programme learning outcomes.

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

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

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

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

- the central student hub offers students from specific underrepresented groups access to personal, named contacts who coordinate support for that group. This is closely linked to academic support and welfare services
- academic supervisors, counselling service and student wellbeing officers are embedded in each department and combine to offer holistic welfare support
- a bespoke pre-arrival induction programme
- international students benefit from a specialist support team who offer advice and assistance on transition into life in the UK
- weekly drop in and other events to build a sense of belonging in the group
- bespoke online resources to support learning and a dedicated staff contact who provides one-to-one support for mature students.

The panel discussed noted examples of good practice in the submission, such as opportunities to undertake a placement in an industry of choice for up to 12 months.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel concluded that the provider effectively supports its students to achieve these gains. Therefore it considered this feature to be very high quality.

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

The panel considered this feature is very high quality.

The panel noted that the provider refers to a wide range of sources, including student outcomes, national student survey data, and awards and initiatives as evidence of the educational gains its students achieve.

The submission also highlights a 2022 alumni survey, in which 85 per cent of graduates said their analytical skills had improved due to their degree, providing strong evidence that students achieve the educational gains the institution intends.

The panel noted that, as the provider's educational gains are explicitly related to programme level learning outcomes that are embedded within programmes, the evaluation of students' progress is largely built into student assessments. The panel considered this to be a logical approach but it does not allow for a way to evaluate and demonstrate the wider educational gains achieved by students through their extra curricular learning experiences.

Looking at the evidence overall therefore, the panel concluded the provider evaluates the gains made by its students, which is consistent with a very high quality feature.

### **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.

In considering whether the 'best fit' rating should be 'Gold' or 'Silver', the panel looked at all the evidence across all the features and judged the evidence to show there is typically outstanding quality and some very high quality provision for all groups of students and most courses.

In judging 'Gold' as the best fit, the panel considered all the evidence and concluded that student experience and student outcomes are typically outstanding quality, consistent with a rating of 'Gold'.