



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

Royal Holloway, University of London

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at Royal Holloway, University of London 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:

- very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting students' learning, progression, and attainment
- course content and delivery that effectively encourages students to engage in their learning, and stretches them to develop their knowledge and skills
- very high quality support for staff professional development
- a supportive learning environment in which students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support
- physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning
- effective engagement with students, leading to improvements to their experiences and outcomes.

There is also an outstanding quality feature:

- the use of research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement to contribute to an outstanding academic experience.

Student outcomes: Silver

Student outcomes are typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- effective support for students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses
- very high rates of successful progression 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.

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

Royal Holloway, University of London sets out its core values and aims as ‘inclusivity and social justice’. A core element of its strategy is ‘controlled, substantial growth, based on a recognition of emerging demand’.

The provider is a campus-based university, which had a total student population of 12,560 in 2020-21. Business and Management is its largest subject area with 18.9 per cent of undergraduate students studying this, followed by Computing.

The provider has experienced changing student characteristics over the TEF assessment period. In 2020, for the first time, students from ethnic minorities made up the majority of the student intake. A greater number of students now come from the most disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, making up a third of students. The number of students who are the first in their family to attend university is 36 per cent.

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.

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 considered that the student experience is typically very high quality. Across the aspect the panel found:

- six features are very high quality
- one feature is outstanding quality.

The panel noted that some of the very high quality features had outstanding elements, but it did not find the aspect as a whole to be typically of outstanding quality.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and found the 'best fit' rating to be 'Silver'. The panel's assessment of the student experience features is set out below.

Teaching, assessment, and feedback

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

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

The evidence in the provider and student submissions included:

- evaluating courses systematically using a curriculum audit tool
- curriculum development to reflect the diversity of the student body to make it diverse and globally engaged
- establishing an inclusive education board which analyses and reports on teaching practices to reduce inequalities. This has resulted in funding for student co-creation partnerships, although there was limited evidence of the impact of this
- positive comments in the student submission on feedback and course organisation. The impacts of the coronavirus pandemic are also noted, and that the move online was inconsistent with lecturers not equipped to use new equipment
- credible actions taken to address performance in Business and Management, and a plan for improvement is in place for Law
- that coronavirus resulted in significant changes to teaching and assessment. This included authentic and skills based assessments, blended learning overseen by a flexible education board, and identifying key priorities around inclusivity, staff development and teaching innovation.

Overall, the panel found the feature to be very high quality, and that the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting its

students' learning, progression, and attainment. The panel noted evidence of tailoring to the provider's specific demographic groups and the successful adaptations due to coronavirus.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The evidence in the provider submission included:

- National Student Survey results (2019) showing 89.7 per cent of students agreed that 'the course is intellectually stimulating', demonstrating strong student engagement in their studies
- revising the assessment strategy and working with the students' union, Quality Assurance Agency guidance, and external examiners to provide online assessments and time limited open book examinations, as well as innovative approaches to creative practice and performance
- a strong focus on experiential learning. Examples include digital fieldtrips and online interviews in Geography and Earth Sciences, and an innovative approach in History to assessment and an 'unessay' alternative
- diversifying and tailoring the curriculum towards its students, such as Law and Politics hosting a partnership with institutions in Somalia
- creating a toolkit to embed augmented reality into online teaching in Drama, with its creator shortlisted for an award. This practice has been shared across departments.

The panel considered there was evidence of innovation and the tailoring of provision to students' needs. However, it did not judge the feature to be outstanding as it could not see how students are stretched to their fullest potential, or inspired to engage through an institution-wide approach.

Considering the evidence overall, the panel concluded 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. This is consistent with a very high quality feature.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

The panel considered this feature to be outstanding.

The evidence in the provider submission included:

- establishing the inclusive education board, building on the recommendations of external research. The central focus of the board is reducing inequalities in access, attainment gaps and progression, going beyond specific access and participation plan commitments
- a systematic approach to embedding research training into courses, with a strong number of students who have co-authored publications
- how the proportion of students studying courses with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies accreditation has significantly increased

- that advice and input from employers and industry has resulted in changes to teaching and learning in a range of subjects
- partnerships with collaborative research sites and specialist facilities to allow students to engage with current research. Many students' research projects have been published and students often progress into research itself after completing their studies
- that there is strong engagement with employers within courses, such as music composition projects workshopped by professional performers
- how accreditation is suitably attached to necessary courses, including additional accreditations from organisations such as the National Cyber Security Centre.

The panel considered there was evidence of very good synergies between research and teaching, embedded into a systematic approach.

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

Staff professional development and academic practice

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

The evidence in the provider submission included:

- staff development that emphasises diverse and flexible teaching approaches, to facilitate accessible, active, and engaging student centred learning both on campus and online
- continuing professional development for all academic staff accredited by AdvanceHE, along with programmes of teaching development for other staff e.g. technicians
- academic promotion routes based on teaching and learning achievements
- annual teaching prizes to recognise staff development and share good practice
- training in online and blended learning in response to coronavirus, with significant reach
- targeted career development programmes such as the springboard initiative which aids women early on in their careers.

While overall the panel judged this feature to be very high quality, it noted that there were outstanding elements. The panel saw that approaches were embedded, but it did not consider the approaches to staff development to be outstanding in themselves.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The indicator for full-time students provided compelling evidence that 'academic support' is very high quality.

The provider submission outlined further evidence of very high quality, including:

- central and departmental support structures, including a central department for academic support which contributes to developing undergraduate modules
- curriculum embedded skills development and optional additional support, in particular with mathematics skills
- how learning developers work with departments to improve tailored course level support such as essay clinics, one to one sessions, maths tutorials and writing cafes. 500 students engaged in individual feedback sessions, with positive comments in the student submission
- a personal tutor system that offers personalised academic support
- student dashboards that provide a range of data on student engagement and academic performance.

Considering the evidence overall, the panel concluded that 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 very high quality.

The indicator for full-time students provided compelling evidence that 'learning resources' are very high quality. There was some variation across different subjects.

The evidence in the provider and student submissions included:

- how technology is embedded into teaching and assessment including the use of AI in online assessments
- that large investments in the teaching estate and learning spaces including a new library and student services building have transformed physical learning resources. Teaching spaces have been transformed with AV equipment and there are dedicated hubs for commuting students
- how virtual learning environments are being developed to integrate with other learning systems and improve accessibility, including captioned recordings
- enhancing library provision to increase access to resources with fewer online turnaways
- that there are initiatives to tackle digital poverty, with grants helping 484 students to date
- increasing National Student Survey scores for IT resources and facilities supporting learning are highlighted in the student submission.

The panel noted a clear positive trajectory in the data, as well as evidence in the provider and student submissions of the use of innovative resources and the positive impact that these have

had on students. However, the panel considered there was not enough evidence of the tailoring of these resources to suggest that this feature is outstanding.

Overall, the panel concluded that the feature is very high quality, and that physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

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

Evidence in the provider and student submissions included:

- a systematic approach based on mapping student engagement to key decision points, and positive feedback from students on the open lines of communications with the provider
- students' union research that informs digital education developments
- that student panels input into the development of teaching and learning, including hybrid teaching and general changes in assessment strategy
- recognition of a need to gain further opinion from students and implementing a focus group scheme with representation across student demographics. There are three to five panel sessions a year and over 100 student panellists at each.
- the student submission highlights the effective changes made to the student engagement structure and the provider's values being successfully embedded in academic representatives.

While the panel considered the student engagement panel to be an element of outstanding quality, overall the panel judged this feature to be very high quality, concluding that the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students.

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. Across the aspect the panel found:

- five features are very high quality

- there was not enough evidence to judge one feature as very high quality, although the panel placed less weight on this in line with the TEF assessment guidance.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and considered the best fit rating to be 'Silver'. This is because the evidence best fits the description: 'all features of the aspect are very high quality for most groups of students'.

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

Approaches to supporting student success

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The evidence in the provider submission included:

- details of a focus on transitioning to university which is being formalised through an academic transition framework. Support includes a big read scheme, tailored support to the changing student population such as HeadStart for students with contextualised offers, and stronger inductions in the Foundation year
- support for employability is delivered in all degrees and 90 per cent of students are supported actively by the careers service
- that students can undertake work experience, extended to 67 per cent of students who have access early in their course
- support is offered for student volunteering and studies abroad, with 3,000 students and staff attending a festival of volunteering, and over 4,900 students engaging in volunteering
- that placements have been relaunched following an evaluation which found positive impacts on students' learning, but underrepresentation of some groups. Steps to address this include offering opportunities for underrepresented groups in a summer skills placement programme.

Overall, the panel considered this feature to be very high quality, with some outstanding elements related to addressing inequalities. The panel concluded that the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The indicators for full-time students provided compelling evidence that both 'continuation' and 'completion' are very high quality.

The panel noted that in areas such as Law and Criminology, where there was evidence of less strong performance in the indicators, the provider has taken steps to address this with inductions, study skills initiatives and increased monitoring.

The panel noted that counselling and tailored support are available to students with disabilities, financial difficulties and other individual needs, supported by specified teams. The panel

considered it evidence of success that continuation and completion rates for students with disabilities are over 90 per cent.

Considering all the evidence, the panel concluded that there are very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses. This is consistent with a very high quality feature.

Progression rates

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The indicator for full-time students provided evidence that 'progression' is very high quality.

The panel noted that the indicator for students from a mixed ethnic background was below very high quality, but that the provider is taking strong measures including tailored initiatives to improve in this area.

The panel noted evidence of initiatives such as employability related workshops embedded into Politics and Philosophy, and specific support with placements for students from underrepresented groups. Additionally, it found evidence of positive graduate outcomes data.

Considering the evidence overall, the panel concluded that there are very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

Intended educational gains

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The panel considered that the provider articulates the range of educational gains it intends its students to achieve, using learning outcomes for courses and individual modules. There is a strategic focus on expanding these gains beyond subject knowledge and discipline skills.

Educational gains are set out within an integrated framework built around 12 meta skills. The provider embeds these educational gains into its learning outcomes, which are validated and monitored by student input.

The panel noted that learning outcomes are evaluated by degree results, with the provider's degree outcomes showing an improvement to 82 per cent 'good degrees' in 2019. Extended learning outcomes beyond subject knowledge are also evaluated.

Overall, the panel found this feature to be very high quality, concluding that the provider articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students. The panel did not consider the feature to be outstanding because there was not enough evidence of the gains being fully related to students' future ambitions.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The evidence in the submissions included:

- that student achievements are monitored and actions are taken to reduce awarding gaps
- the extracurricular passport award has been revised to support all students to participate
- the student submission demonstrates that the attainment gap for students from ethnic minorities has been reduced following the student engagement project, and giving voice to the lived experiences of these students. This is further underpinned by a commitment to addressing inequalities with the renewal of membership of the Race Equality Charter.
- the student panels held an employability special session to develop strategies around student outcomes and to tailor provision to meet inequalities.

Overall, the panel considered this feature to be very high quality, noting the strong monitoring of student gains and the tailored provisions in place to aid their attainment. The panel concluded that the provider effectively supports its students to achieve educational gains.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered there was limited evidence in the provider submission relating to this feature, with the discussion primarily relating to degree awarding patterns.

Overall, the panel found there was not enough evidence to judge this feature as very high quality. However, the panel noted the TEF guidance that panel members should not prevent a provider being awarded higher ratings solely based on an absence of its own developed measures of educational gains.

Overall: Silver

Applying the guidance and the expert judgement of panel members, the panel found the 'best fit' overall rating to be 'Silver'.

Throughout its assessment, the panel found consistent compelling evidence of very high quality provision. The panel also identified one outstanding quality feature as well as a number of outstanding elements within the very high quality features.

As the panel awarded a 'Silver' rating to both the student experience aspect and the student outcomes aspect, the overall rating is also 'Silver'.