



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

University of Northumbria at Newcastle

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at the University of Northumbria at Newcastle 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, assessment and feedback practices that are effective in supporting students' learning
- course content and delivery that encourage student engagement and stretch students to develop knowledge and skills
- use of research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement to contribute to the academic experience
- a supportive learning environment, with a range of academic support
- physical and virtual learning resources that are used effectively.

Outstanding quality features include:

- support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice that is embedded
- embedded engagement which leads to continuous improvement to experiences and outcomes.

Student outcomes: Gold

Student outcomes are typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- tailored approaches that are highly effective in ensuring student success and progression beyond their studies
- clear articulation of the educational gains the provider intends its students to achieve, including why these are highly relevant to its students
- evidence-based, effective and tailored approaches to supporting students in achieving intended educational gains.

Very high quality features include:

- continuation and completion rates for the provider's students
- progression rates for the provider's students
- evaluation of the educational gains the provider intends its students to achieve.

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 provider's strategic vision includes providing an enriching and empowering academic experience for students, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds in the North East of England. Its submission details a strong commitment to being an anchor institution in the region, with an aim to raise educational aspirations. The provider states that 62 per cent of its students are from the North East with the remainder primarily from the north of England.

Across the TEF period, the provider had an average of around 18,500 full-time undergraduates each year with a gradual increase in this time. In the same period, part-time undergraduate numbers decreased from 1,210 to 480. Undergraduate apprenticeship provision grew to 1,270 in the period.

The biggest full-time undergraduate subject area is Business and Management, with significant numbers studying Nursing, Creative Arts and Design, Law and Psychology.

The vast majority of undergraduate students are under 21 years old, and 55 per cent are female. Almost 80 per cent are white, around five per cent are Asian, two per cent black and two per cent have a mixed ethnic background, which the provider says reflects the North East's demographic.

The assessment considered information about the provider's undergraduate courses and students on those courses. Although it has a growing apprenticeship provision, the panel noted that the provider did not include details of these optional courses in its submission so they have not been included in the 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 that the quality of student academic experience was typically very high for this provider's mix of students and courses. Across the student experience aspect, the panel found:

- two features are outstanding
- one feature is very high quality, with some elements of outstanding quality
- four features that are very high quality
- compelling evidence in the provider and student submissions and the indicators that the very high quality and outstanding features apply across all the provider's student groups and the range of its courses.

The panel observed that the main differences in quality of provision are at subject level, although there is uncertainty in some of the data.

Considering the evidence holistically, the panel considered the aspect to be typically very high quality.

The panel considered all features of the aspect to be at least very high quality for most groups of students and 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 considered this to be a very high quality feature.

The panel saw compelling initial evidence of very high quality from the indicators for 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' though with variability noted for some students and courses.

The provider submission details its Programme Framework for Northumbria Awards (PFNA), which contain four pillars: research-informed learning; employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship; assessment for learning and achievement; and technology enhanced learning. This was introduced in 2016-17 and involved revalidation of all undergraduate programmes.

The student submission showed evidence that there were many examples of outstanding teaching across the provider, but also stated that there were areas of inconsistency.

Very high quality practice identified by the panel included:

- a focus on greater consistency in assessments, with embedding of authentic, real-world assessments across programmes
- research-informed capstone modules, with examples from different disciplines

- rigorous programme quality assurance processes, with the introduction of continuous programme performance review in 2021
- a new quality enhancement development framework being developed, with a focus on and investment in inclusive education.

Overall, the panel concluded from the submissions and indicators evidence that the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, assessment and feedback practices that are effective in supporting its students' learning, progression and attainment. The panel considered this to be a very high quality feature.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

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

The provider submission says that all courses benefit from research-informed learning, and there is an aim to ensure that students gain the knowledge and skills to enter professional employment, start their own business or undertake further study.

The panel found the implementation of the PFNA to be very high quality, with direct student involvement and engagement to inform its redesign.

The student submission details results from its TEF student survey. For the statement 'my course's content and delivery engage me in my learning, and this helps to develop my knowledge and skill', 32 per cent strongly agreed, 51 per cent agreed, and only four per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The panel concluded that the course content and delivery inspire the provider's students to engage in their learning and stretch students to develop their knowledge and skills. 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 panel noted that very high quality practices included:

- research-informed teaching and professional practice being part of the PFNA, with the submission including a supportive quote from an external examiner
- 58 external professional sector recognition bodies accrediting 188 of the provider's undergraduate programmes, meaning that more than two-thirds of students benefit from this external recognition
- as detailed in the student submission, the students' union recruits and trains student representatives to review course criteria and descriptors from a student perspective. They help to ensure that the research which underpins teaching is accessible to students.

The panel considered that there is sufficient evidence to suggest 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. As such the panel concluded that this is a very high quality feature.

Staff professional development and academic practice

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

There are several examples within the provider submission of outstanding quality support for staff to develop their academic practice, including investment in staff development, such as:

- a professional recognition scheme, established in 2015 and accredited by Advance HE, covering staff at all stages of their career
- 69 per cent of academic staff having Advance HE fellowship, compared to a sector average of 46 per cent, while 78 per cent of staff have academic teaching qualifications
- a teaching qualifications framework embedded in probation and promotion processes
- an extensive induction programme for new academic staff
- a comprehensive peer observation and support scheme, which encourages enhancement and innovation
- support for all staff and students to become digitally fluent.

Overall, the panel considered that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that there is outstanding support for staff professional development and that excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider. The panel therefore considered this an outstanding quality feature.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel judged this to be a very high quality feature, and noted that there were some outstanding elements.

The 'academic support' indicator for full-time students provides compelling initial evidence of a very high quality feature, though with some variation noted for some groups of students.

The provider submission states that it identifies and addresses the needs of students from the point of admission. There is evidence of a range of facilities to support all groups of students, and specialist support teams are in place.

Examples of practice the panel found to be of very high quality:

- student, library and academic services teams which exceed expectations on a number of fronts, according to its recent external review by the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) scheme. It has held the CSE award for 12 years
- an induction and support programme with evidence of a tailored approach to match the starting points of students

- personal tutoring which is an integral part of support for students, with personal tutors having access to an analytics platform enabling them to provide 'nudges' for students. The student submission noted that this is an area which needs to be developed
- the student submission praised efforts to provide more support for students from underrepresented groups, in particular those with a disability.

Examples of practice the panel found to be outstanding:

- an 'Ask4Help' service, introduced in 2018, which is available 24/7, providing all students with a single route for enquiries. It resolves around 40 per cent of queries directly, refers around 30 per cent to specialist support teams, and handled 67,000 calls in one year
- a training programme, completed annually by all personal tutors, ensuring that they are aware of the latest information and can signpost students to the most appropriate teams.

Overall, the panel concluded that the submissions and indicators show that the provider fosters a supportive learning environment and its students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support. The panel considered the evidence to demonstrate a very high quality feature, with some elements of outstanding practice.

Learning resources

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

Looking at the 'learning resources' indicator, the panel found compelling initial evidence of a very high quality feature.

There is initial description of very high quality features in the submission, such as:

- investment of £52 million between 2015-2018 to provide central locations for service delivery, as well as a wide variety of spaces for individual and group study
- a library which is viewed positively by students (according to National Student Survey scores), and an increase between 2019-20 and 2021-22 in student reading list interactions by students on taught courses
- the use of learning technology, in line with the 'technology enhanced learning' pillar of the PFNA, with the student submission stating that overall, students have a positive experience of learning and teaching platform Blackboard.

The panel concluded that there is sufficient evidence that physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning. The panel therefore considered this to be a very high quality feature.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel considered this to be an outstanding feature.

The 'student voice' indicator provides compelling initial evidence of a very high quality feature for full-time students though with some variation noted across subject areas.

The provider and student submissions both describe a wide range of outstanding ways in which the university engages with students. For example:

- a collaborative approach in decision-making, with extensive student representation on committees and co-creation, such as student input and partnership playing a key part in PFNA's development and roll-out
- a robust Continuous Programme Review enhancement process, which includes student partnership
- paid student inclusion consultants, whose impact has included improving understanding of the lived experience of underrepresented students
- paid student career advocates, who promote the work of the provider's graduate futures team.

Overall, the panel concluded that the submissions and indicators demonstrate that the provider has embedded engagement with its students, including those from underrepresented groups, leading to continuous improvement to their experiences and outcomes.

Student outcomes: Gold

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

The panel found that the quality of student outcomes was typically very high for this provider's mix of students and courses. Across the student outcomes aspect, the panel found:

- three features that are outstanding
- two features that are very high quality, with elements of outstanding practice
- one feature that is very high quality.

Considering the evidence holistically and the provider context, the panel considered there to be evidence of typically outstanding student outcomes across the aspect as a whole, across almost all groups of students and for all courses and subjects.

Applying the ratings criteria, the panel considered the best fit rating to be 'Gold' because most features are outstanding quality for almost all groups of students and courses.

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.

Both the provider and the student submissions describe a number of tailored practices which the panel considered to be of outstanding quality. These include:

- experiential learning activities embedded in the curriculum, with 106 modules across 63 programmes which have embedded live project or clinic-based learning opportunities
- a programme of centrally delivered, on-programme employability enhancement and support
- an incubator hub which has supported the creation of more than 300 student businesses since 2009-10, employing more than 1,000 people with a combined annual turnover of £95 million
- evidence of highly effective, tailored approaches to supporting student outcomes through the use of analytics
- the student submission's description of the tailored approach to careers support, which is informed by a career readiness survey, and investment in student and library services to provide more careers support for students from ethnic minority backgrounds
- in response to a TEF student survey, 32 per cent of students agreeing strongly, 45 per cent agreeing, and only 6 per cent disagreeing with the statement 'the university supports me to succeed and progress beyond my studies'.

Overall, the panel considered that there is sufficient evidence that the provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring that students succeed in and progress beyond their studies. The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Continuation and completion rates

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

The 'continuation' and 'completion' indicators provide evidence of very high quality for full-time students, with outstanding rates of completion in particular for some groups of students and courses.

The panel noted outstanding rates of continuation and completion for part-time students, but considered the small size of this group, and placed less weight on this evidence for this reason.

The panel considered that there is sufficient evidence that there are typically very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses. As such, the panel considered this to be a very high quality feature.

Progression rates

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

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

For full-time students, the panel noted that employment outcomes for black students are particularly positive. The panel also noted there was variation between subjects with some performing below the level of very high quality.

The panel considered overall that there are very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses, particularly in the specific context of the provider. The panel noted the typically outstanding rates of progression into employment for part-time students, whilst noting also the smaller numbers of students studying part-time compared to full-time.

The panel concluded that, overall, this was a very high quality feature.

Intended educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission contains a very clear articulation of educational gains linked to the provider's core mission of empowering students and graduates to identify and create more options and opportunities for success in their further study, career and life ambitions.

The panel found evidence of outstanding quality in the following elements of the provider submission, such as:

- educational gains being embedded in PFNA, alongside evidence of a tailored approach
- the introduction in 2016-17 of the Northumbria Graduate Characteristics, which have been subsequently, developed, enhanced, and embedded in programme design
- a career readiness survey having been taken on enrolment since 2017, plus a finalists survey taken on graduation since 2019, both of which inform the approach to supporting educational gain
- a programme established to address the lack of student opportunity resulting from the coronavirus pandemic, which has now been embedded post-pandemic, providing paid placements and internships across the university.

The panel considered that the evidence suggests the provider clearly 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. As such, the panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider details its approach to supporting students to achieve educational gains and provides an evidence-based approach which is tailored to subjects, and encompasses graduate outcomes data which is recalibrated each year. The provider also has an analytics platform which provides insights into the deployment of highly effective and tailored progression into employment.

The student submission notes that in its TEF survey, 77 per cent of students strongly agreed or agreed that the provider 'supports me to succeed and progress beyond my studies', while 84 per

cent strongly agreed or agreed that it 'supports me to develop my academic skills e.g., critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, academic writing, research and referencing skills'.

Overall, the panel considered that the provider's approach to supporting its students to achieve its articulated educational gains are evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to their different starting points and therefore concluded that this was an outstanding quality feature.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

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

The provider submission articulates an approach to measuring educational gains based on data from its Career Readiness survey and the development of Northumbria Graduate Characteristics.

The panel found that some evaluation of educational gains is evident, with in-year evaluations through career readiness surveys that are used to provide additional support. However, it considered that there was not yet a clearly articulated and fully embedded measure for the evaluation of educational gains.

Overall, the panel considered that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the provider evaluates the gains made by its students.

Overall: Silver

Applying the guidance and the panel members' expert judgement, 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 'Gold'. The panel weighted these two aspects equally and considered all the evidence across all the features and across all the provider's student groups, subjects and courses to come to a 'best fit' decision of an overall rating of 'Silver'. 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 found all student experience features to at least very high quality for almost all groups of students and courses and most student outcomes features to be of outstanding quality for almost all groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups.

The panel did consider whether the evidence was consistent with a best fit rating of 'Gold', and in making a holistic judgement carefully reviewed the balance of very high quality and outstanding features across both aspects.

The panel judged the evidence to show, on the whole, there to be typically very high quality provision, consistent with a best fit rating of 'Silver'.