



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

AECC University College

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Bronze

Typically, the experience students have at AECC University College and the outcomes it leads to are high quality and there are some very high quality features.

Student experience: Bronze

The student academic experience is typically high quality, and there is one outstanding quality feature:

- a wide range of sector leading equipment with numerous physical and virtual resources, tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning.

Student outcomes: Silver

Student outcomes are typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses
- very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses
- the provider articulates the educational gains it intends students to achieve, and why these are relevant to students
- effective support for students to achieve educational gains, including opportunities to engage with employers.

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

AECC University College aims to 'support the development of the health workforce', 'provide outstanding student experience and outcomes' and 'provide affordable patient centred care'.

The provider is a small specialist provider of degrees in the Health Sciences, specialising in chiropractic education, and was the first chiropractic training institution in Europe. In 2020-21 it had 780 full-time undergraduates and 120 part-time undergraduates, and is based near Bournemouth. Most study Chiropractic with some new small courses in Clinical Exercise, Sport and Health Science, and Radiography.

Over the four year TEF assessment period, 38 per cent of full-time undergraduate students were over 21 years of age. 40 per cent of the provider's full-time students are from the EU or are international. Students joined with a wide variety of previous qualifications.

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: Bronze

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.

Across the aspect of student experience the panel found:

- there was not enough evidence to judge most features as very high quality
- four features had some very high quality elements, but were not rated as very high quality overall
- one feature is outstanding quality

The panel considered that there were multiple examples of practices that could have been judged very high quality, but found either they were not widespread or it was not clear how they impacted the student experience. Additionally, there was little further evidence in the indicators to support the effectiveness of the provider's teaching.

The panel applied the criteria and found the 'best fit' rating to be 'Bronze'. This is because student experience is best described as having some very high quality features for most students, consistent with a rating of 'Bronze'.

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

Teaching, assessment, and feedback

The panel found there was not enough evidence to rate this feature very high quality.

The indicator provides very strong evidence that 'assessment and feedback' is below very high quality for full-time students.

Additional evidence in the provider submission includes:

- teaching across different disciplines, with placement supervision including students from all courses
- regular updates to the curriculum and practical experience such as increasing involvement in multi professional settings e.g. radiographers, cancer nurses and physiotherapists
- relatively high contact hours, reflecting practical work alongside small seminar groups
- the provider ensured chiropractic was one of the health programmes permitted to continue practical teaching during coronavirus, and incorporated video assessments through this period
- an external examiner praised assessment as being appropriate for practice
- systems are in place to monitor compliance with assessment practice and marking.

The panel recognised there are some very high quality elements in this feature, but concluded that there is insufficient evidence in either in the submissions or the indicators of how effective they are in supporting students' learning and attainment. The panel also found the extent to which these practices applied to most students was not clear.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel considered there is not enough evidence that the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The panel found there was not enough evidence to rate this feature as very high quality.

The indicator provides probable evidence that 'teaching on my course' is below very high quality for full-time students.

Evidence in the provider submission includes:

- the provider's teaching is internationally recognised and it shares knowledge with international training providers
- an expert panel commends the teaching approach, including its patient centered focus, students being involved in research, commitment to feedback improvement, meeting students where they are, and course quality
- there is a 1:10 tutor to student ratio, with tutors also acting as supervisors and mentors. This is supported by positive student feedback on mentor relationships.
- extensive clinic activity with approximately 47,000 patient visits in 2017-18, demonstrating sector leading quality
- the quality assurance team commended the provider's commitment to research, adapting to coronavirus, financial support for students, international student support, and staff development
- strong efforts to adapt to coronavirus challenges, particularly in terms of practical provision
- a focus on active learning with plenty of hands on clinical contact. Simulation is also used in teaching methods.

The panel noted evidence of a number of very high quality elements to this feature, and recognised the quality of clinical work and partnering with other institutes. However, the indicator provides evidence of not very high quality and there was no other evidence of the effectiveness of the provider's practices.

Therefore, the panel judged there is insufficient evidence of a very high quality feature. It could not conclude 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 found there was not enough evidence to rate this feature as very high quality.

The provider submission included the following evidence:

- the provider is one of a few institutes teaching paediatric and neonatal training, and advises other institutions around the world on this. Thought the panel was unsure if this expertise was being accessed by students
- 22 academic staff members have PhDs and all are involved in teaching, several have chiropractic research fellowships, most other academic staff members have Level 7 qualifications
- there are a few examples of students co-authoring published papers
- a programme to support new graduates into chiropractic research
- teachers are supported by part-time staff who are clinically active, while course leads and personal tutors are established members of staff.

The panel noted examples of sector leading research and some evidence of students being involved. However, it was not clear how this was being accessed by students; how many students were benefitting; or how it impacted students' experience.

Overall, the panel found there was not enough evidence to conclude the provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for its students.

Staff professional development and academic practice

The panel found there was not enough evidence to rate this feature as very high quality.

Evidence in the provider submission includes:

- the number of staff holding a fellow of the higher education academy or equivalent has increased
- a new academic framework allocates 'protected time' for professional development
- introducing a new PGCert in education in 2023, although impacts are mostly beyond this TEF assessment period
- two staff members have roles within the General Council of Chiropractic, and a further two have received the British Chiropractic Association Chiropractor of the Year award
- continuing professional development workshops are offered for staff to adopt an 'active blended connected' style of teaching.

The panel noted evidence of some elements of good practice, but they were either not widespread enough or lacked evidence of a link to student experience to be considered very high quality elements.

Considering the feature in the round, the panel found insufficient evidence that there is very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted. Therefore, it did not find this is a very high quality feature.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel found there was not enough evidence to rate this feature as very high quality.

The indicator provides very strong evidence that 'academic support' is below very high quality for full-time students.

Evidence in the provider and student submissions include:

- the provider's student services were finalists for the 2020 WhatUni Student Choice Award
- a cross institutional project has been initiated to mitigate the impact of coronavirus, including support for international students. These efforts were recognised as exemplary at a QAA conference
- measures like regular wellbeing checks and a 'coping with coronavirus' webpage supported students, especially those staying locally over winter
- the student submission shows positive feedback for support services like counselling, study skills, and library assistance
- placement support and professional training are offered, particularly for interprofessional environments.

The panel considered that there were a few very high quality elements to this feature, however, it was not clear how widespread these were. The panel also noted there was no acknowledgement of where support services could be improved, particularly since indicators were below very high quality.

The panel therefore concluded there is insufficient evidence 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 to be an outstanding quality feature.

The indicator provides initial evidence that 'learning resources' are very high quality for full-time students.

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

- a wide range of sector leading equipment, with numerous physical and virtual resources. The provider is one of only a few non medical schools to have a prosecution laboratory
- heavy investment in virtual reality systems, simulation, and systems

- a new £4.5m rehabilitation centre near the campus to support further clinical work
- comments from students that study spaces are high quality, but that there are not enough available during assessment periods. However, the provider is offering more in response to student voice.

The panel considered there is evidence of modern physical equipment that is effective at supporting learning across the student body. However, it did note the indicator evidence of not very high quality for disabled students.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel concluded physical and virtual learning resources are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel found there was not enough evidence to rate this feature as very high quality.

The indicator provides compelling evidence that 'student voice' is not very high quality for full-time students.

Evidence in the provider and student submissions include:

- working in partnership with students during 'Project Evolve', which aimed to minimise the impact of coronavirus on students and understanding impacts on their mental health and wellbeing
- the students' union does not have employed sabbatical officers but does have seven elected leads and 'champions' for areas like mental health, and disability who are voluntary
- students' union officers sit on decision making bodies and committees, including the board of governors, and have regular meetings with high level staff
- quotes from one students' union wellbeing champion who confirms student voice has been taken into account in developing student services.

The panel noted some evidence of student voice being considered, but a lack of evidence it is widespread or effective at leading to improvements in the student experience.

Looking at the feature overall, the panel considered there to be insufficient evidence of a very high quality feature whereby the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements to their experiences and outcomes.

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.

Across the student outcomes aspect the panel found:

- four features are very high quality
- there was not enough evidence to judge one feature to be very high quality
- one feature was not given a rating.

The panel considered the very high quality features to apply to most students at the provider.

The panel applied the criteria and considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Silver'. This is because most features are very high quality, consistent with a rating of 'Silver'. The panel did not find the best fit rating is 'Bronze', because most rather than some student outcomes features are very high quality. The panel considered the very high quality features to apply to most rather than all students, however on balance considered student outcomes to be typically very high quality and therefore 'Silver' to be a better fit than 'Bronze'.

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

Approaches to supporting student success

The panel found there was not enough evidence to rate this feature as very high quality.

Evidence in the provider and student submissions includes:

- a strong emphasis on clinical practice putting future practice at the core of its training, and this is praised by external stakeholders
- a future pathways careers event involving clinics offers career support for students, including CV writing assistance
- positive feedback from students on collaboration between the provider and students' union to create a community for students. This includes social facilities on campus, sports, and societies
- annual bursaries and kit bursaries are mentioned by students, but there is no clear evidence of their impact or extent.

The panel found some evidence of very high quality practice, but noted the lack of an overall strategic approach, along with limited evidence of effectiveness. Therefore overall the panel concluded there is not enough evidence the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies, and could not judge this as a very high quality feature.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

For full-time students, the indicators provide evidence that 'continuation' is very high quality and 'completion' is below the level of very high quality.

The panel noted that the provider has been through change in the way students are registered, and that this has negatively affected the indicators for 'completion'. The provider also gave some of

their own data which suggests that completion has been at a high level. The panel considered this explanation sufficient to address the not very high quality 'completion' indicators.

Looking at all the evidence, the panel concluded that there are very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

Progression rates

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

There is no progression data in the TEF indicators due to low reporting numbers. However, the panel considered data from the Graduate Outcomes Survey from the provider submission. 45 per cent of the provider's students responded to the survey, and the results show it ranks highly compared to other complementary medicine providers.

The survey provides detail of where students go on to work following their studies. For one year, 100 per cent of students who responded reported that they were in professional, high skilled work.

The panel considered this to be a very high quality feature but judged there was not sufficient data across all students and all years to judge it as outstanding. Looking at all the evidence, 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 provider defines educational gains as ensuring their students are career ready, and are able to be practicing chiropractors. The panel considered this to be a valid aim, and appropriate given it is a specialised provider whose students study there to become effective practitioners.

When considering if this feature was outstanding, the panel considered that the provider did not set out what might be unique about their practitioners based on the educational gains made through studying there.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel judged 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 found this feature to be very high quality.

Evidence in the provider submission includes:

- supporting students to prepare for their future career with opportunities to engage with employers at a future pathways event
- students adhering to fitness to practice expectations and regularly commit to a code of practice

- developing practice through placements; diverse clinical experiences, and learning across different professions
- a business skills unit supporting Master of Chiropractic students as self-employed practitioners
- supporting personal development, with 25 to 30 courses a year delivered by external industry professionals.

The panel noted the range of efforts that the provider takes to ensure that their students are career ready. Considering the evidence in the round, the panel judged that the provider effectively supports its students to achieve these gains, consistent with a very high quality feature.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered there was no clear evidence of an evaluation of the provider's educational gains, so it was not able to judge this feature.

Overall: Bronze

Based on the guidance and the expert judgement of panel members, the panel found the 'best fit' rating to be 'Bronze'.

The panel considered student experience features to be 'Bronze'; and student outcomes features to be 'Silver', and gave equal weight to both. It carefully examined the evidence across all features, student groups, subjects, and courses.

The panel considered one student experience feature to be outstanding and several other features in student experience to have very high quality elements. They also found four of the student outcomes features to be very high quality. They noted however that some of the very high quality features did not apply to all groups of students.

In judging 'Bronze' to be the best fit, the panel considered that there is not enough evidence that the student experience and student outcomes are typically of very high quality, consistent with a 'Bronze' rating. Instead they considered that the student experience and student outcomes are typically high quality, and there are some very high quality features.