



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

Loughborough University

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Gold

Typically, the experience students have at Loughborough University and the outcomes it leads to are outstanding.

Student experience: Gold

The student academic experience is typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- the embedding of outstanding teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are highly effective in supporting students' learning, progression, and attainment
- course content and delivery that inspires students to actively engage in their learning
- a supportive learning environment in which students have access to a wide range of outstanding quality academic support
- physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning
- an embedded approach to student engagement, leading to continuous improvement to the experiences and outcomes of students.

There are also some very high quality features including:

- the use of research, employer engagement and professional practice to contribute to a very high quality academic experience
- very high quality support for staff professional development.

Student outcomes: Gold

Student outcomes are typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- highly effective, tailored approaches to ensuring students succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses
- outstanding rates of progression for the provider's students and courses
- a clear articulation of the range of educational gains the provider intends its students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to its students and their future ambitions.

There is also one very high quality feature:

- the provider effectively supports its 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

Loughborough University is a large university in the East Midlands. It seeks to ensure the development of its students 'as individuals, enhancing their capabilities as creative, confident and adaptable 21st Century citizens who will make a significant contribution to global society'. It has received global recognition for its excellence in sport.

In the 2020-2021 academic year, it had 14,340 undergraduates all of whom study full-time. Around 80 per cent of its students are undergraduates.

A large proportion of students study STEM subjects, especially engineering. Over half of the student population is male (around 60 per cent), and the number of disabled students and students from minority ethnic groups is around the sector average. The provider has a very small population of mature students. 16 per cent of students come from low socio-economic backgrounds and the vast majority of its students are not local to the provider.

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: 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 found the student experience is typically outstanding for the provider's mix of students and courses.

Across the student experience aspect, the panel found:

- five features are of outstanding quality
- two features are very high quality
- that the outstanding and very high quality features apply to all groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups, and across all courses and subjects.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and considered the best fit rating to be 'Gold'. This is because most features of the aspect are outstanding for all groups of students and courses.

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

Teaching, assessment, and feedback

The panel found this feature to be of outstanding quality.

The indicators showed:

- outstanding 'teaching on my course' for full-time students
- very high quality 'assessment and feedback' for full-time students.

Further evidence of outstanding quality in the provider submission included:

- guiding principles of curriculum design implemented across the provider to ensure consistency across subject areas which includes interactivity and active learning as part of each module
- investment in plans to improve assessment and feedback, including a list of outcomes from the provider's research project
- the provider's practice being informed by its own research and engagement with students (e.g. research on racial equity leading to frameworks for modules that ensure learning is inclusive and equally accessible)
- interventions taken to ensure the delivery of a robust and quality educational experience during the pandemic, supported by student survey data displaying student satisfaction.

The student submission included internal survey data and focus group feedback showing generally high levels of satisfaction with teaching and positive responses following the provider's interventions to improve assessment.

Overall, the panel considered the evidence across the indicator data, provider and student submissions show the provider has embedded outstanding practices that are highly effective in supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The panel found this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission included evidence of outstanding quality, including:

- robust procedures to audit existing and newly approved modules, undertaken annually to ensure that all programmes contain excellent course content
- all programmes allowing for students to undertake placements or overseas study, and this opportunity is taken up by close to half of students
- a strong commitment to professional accreditation, with over half of all undergraduate programmes being accredited by a professional, statutory and regulatory body
- the creation of new interdisciplinary programmes to align with areas of research to strengthen and cater to student expectations allowing opportunities for greater collaboration across the provider.

The student submission included survey data and focus group responses suggesting that high numbers of students felt academically challenged by their degree.

With the 'teaching on my course' indicator above providing compelling initial evidence of outstanding quality, supported by compelling evidence in both the provider and student submissions, the panel concluded that the provider's course content and delivery inspire the provider's students to actively engage in their learning.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

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

Evidence of very high quality in the provider submission included:

- significant engagement with industry in the creation of curricula, with advisory boards shaping programmes in business and STEM disciplines, and the creation of industrial projects in engineering
- using links with alumni and employers across the full range of disciplines to enhance programme quality
- evidence of innovation around international exchanges and research informed changes to criminology curricula
- professional practitioners providing support and engaging with students across a range of subject areas.

The panel considered that the provider uses research and particularly employer engagement and professional practice to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for its students. The panel considered whether this was among the very best in the sector and concluded further evidence would be required of embedded research/engagement-led student experiences across the full range of students. Overall, the panel considered there to be sufficient evidence to conclude that this was a very high quality but not an outstanding feature.

Staff professional development and academic practice

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

The provider submission showed evidence of very high quality, including:

- a requirement that all teaching staff must work towards a teaching qualification or advance higher education fellowship, with over 75 per cent of staff holding either, which is above the sector average
- promotion criteria which refers to teaching quality
- a dedicated team for enhanced academic practice that provides professional development opportunities around improving teaching methods, although the submission included limited information about take-up
- a system of rewards for excellent teaching showing a promotion of excellent academic practice.

The panel considered that, while there was evidence to indicate very high quality support for staff professional development, there was not enough evidence to suggest that excellence in academic practice was embedded across the provider. As such, the panel considered this to be a very high quality but not an outstanding feature.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The 'academic support' indicator provided compelling initial evidence of outstanding quality for full-time students.

Further evidence in the provider submission included:

- 84 per cent of new students participate in a six week transition programme to assist with supporting them to prepare for university life. This was developed collaboratively between academics, professional services staff and students
- a programme of personal academic tutoring where personal academic tutors have access to engagement analytics to identify occasions where additional support may be required
- significant financial investment in the provision of student services both in academic schools and central provision focused around academic, disability and wellbeing support. This has resulted in a reduction by half of waiting times for appointments across the TEF period.

The student submission included evidence that 88 per cent of students surveyed by the students' union agreed that the university creates supportive environments in which to study.

The panel considered that all three sources of evidence showed that the provider ensures a supportive learning environment in which its students have access to a wide range of outstanding quality academic support.

Learning resources

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The 'learning resources' indicator provided compelling initial evidence of outstanding quality across all subjects and students.

Further evidence in the provider submission included:

- significant investment in digital resources such as the provider's app and virtual learning environment, which the panel considered to be among the strongest in the sector
- significant capital investment in new physical facilities and infrastructure on campus
- 81 per cent of students surveyed by the provider agreed it makes effective use of technology.

The panel considered there to be ample evidence that the provider uses physical and virtual learning resources effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The 'student voice' indicator provided compelling initial evidence of outstanding quality.

The provider submission included evidence of:

- a robust student representative system with high numbers of participants and an embedded system of feedback opportunities within and after modules, allowing opportunities for students to shape future provision
- examples of more local and informal opportunities for feedback, with incentives provided to students to attend
- an embedded and regularly reviewed student charter jointly developed with students with an agreed framework of principles for student-staff engagement.

The student submission outlined a large number of significant changes that had been made in academic schools as a result of student representative feedback.

The panel considered that both submissions provided compelling evidence of strong relationships between the students' union and the university, particularly around the continued provision of outstanding educational experiences during the coronavirus pandemic. The panel concluded that this was indicative of an embedded approach to student engagement and continuous improvement.

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 student outcomes are typically outstanding for the provider's mix of students and courses.

Across the student outcomes aspect, the panel found:

- four outstanding quality features
- one very high quality feature
- one feature where there was not enough evidence to reach a judgement of very high quality
- that the outstanding and very high quality features apply to all groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups, and across all courses and subjects.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and found the best fit rating to be 'Gold'. This is because most features of the aspect are outstanding quality for 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 found this feature to be of outstanding quality.

Evidence in the provider submission included:

- a robust careers network, which had received sector recognition for its students' graduate employability
- 8,500 employment experience opportunities are advertised by the provider
- tailored support available on a discipline specific basis through a future talent programme for ethnic minority students
- fostering of entrepreneurship by a small number of interested students including seed funding and other financial support.

The student submission confirmed that 83 per cent of students surveyed by the students' union agreed the provider supported their personal development.

The panel considered that the way in which the provider supports its students, especially in terms of securing future success in the labour market, was among the very best in the sector. Overall, the panel concluded that the provider uses 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 to be an outstanding quality feature.

The indicators provided evidence of outstanding quality 'continuation' and very high quality 'completion' for full-time students.

The provider submission included evidence of initiatives that provided tailored support to students through its student success academy and academic success coaching programmes as well as its peer support programme. These programmes provide support throughout key parts of students' academic journey. The panel considered this amounts to a strategically driven programme of support for continuation and completion that begins at transition and is tailored to student stages.

Overall, the panel concluded there was sufficient evidence that there are outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

Progression rates

The panel found this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The 'progression' indicator provided evidence of outstanding quality for full-time students.

As mentioned above, the provider offers a sector leading careers provision, alongside activity such as graduate outcome plans and the provider's finalist futures programmes. The provider has also taken action to improve outcomes in Physics, which have been commented on positively by industrial partners.

Overall, the panel concluded that the evidence shows the provider secures outstanding rates of progression for its students and courses.

Intended educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The panel found that the provider submission clearly articulated a model of educational gains established to secure its students' skills, knowledge, work readiness and personal development. This was developed in association with the students' union through a series of focus groups including students across disciplines.

The panel considered that this approach and the focus on ensuring its students' work readiness demonstrates that 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.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

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

The provider submission sets out work the provider has undertaken around inclusivity, particularly racial equity, to ensure academic staff have the skills to assist its students to make educational gains. The provider submission included evidence of the provider's skills acquisition programme, which focused on self, academic and employment skills development. This had strong levels of

take up by students. The panel judged this to relate well to the provider's conception of educational gains.

Overall, the panel considered there was sufficient evidence to conclude that the provider effectively supports its students to make gains, but that it was not an evidence based approach that fully accounted for its mix of students' different starting points. Therefore the panel judged this a very high quality feature but not an outstanding feature.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered that there was not enough evidence regarding this feature for it to be judged very high quality.

The provider submission briefly explained the way in which the effectiveness of initiatives generally is evaluated by the provider, although this appeared to be descriptive and there was not enough explanation as to how educational gains specifically were evaluated. The panel therefore did not conclude there was enough evidence to judge that this feature was very high quality, and that the provider evaluates the gains made by its students.

Overall: Gold

The panel applied the ratings criteria and considered the best fit overall rating to be 'Gold'.

As both the student outcomes and student experience aspect ratings are 'Gold', it follows that the panel awards an overall rating of 'Gold'.