



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

King's College London

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at King's College 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:

- teaching, feedback and assessment practices and course content and delivery that inspire students to actively engage in and commit to their learning
- use of research, professional practice and employer engagement, contributing to a very high quality academic experience for students
- support for staff professional development, with excellent academic practice promoted
- a supportive learning environment where students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support
- effective engagement with students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of students.

There is also one outstanding quality feature:

- physical and virtual learning resources that are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning.

Student outcomes: Gold

Student outcomes are typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- tailored approaches that are highly effective in ensuring students succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses
- clearly articulation of educational gains students are intended to achieve, including why these are highly relevant to students and their future ambitions
- approaches to supporting students to achieve educational gains that are evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to students and their different starting points
- evaluation of the gains made by students, demonstrating students are succeeding in achieving the intended gains.

There is also one very high quality feature:

- rates of progression for the provider's students and courses.

About the assessment

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is a national scheme run by the Office for Students (OfS) that aims to encourage universities and colleges (providers) to improve and deliver excellent teaching, learning and student outcomes.

The TEF does this by assessing and rating providers for excellence above the high quality baseline that we expect from all providers. It covers undergraduate courses.

Throughout this document, we use the terms 'outstanding' and 'very high quality', which are defined in terms of the TEF 2023 assessment as follows:

- 'outstanding': the quality of the student experience or outcomes are among the very best in the sector, for the mix of students and courses taught by a provider
- 'very high quality': the quality of the student experience or outcomes are materially above the relevant high quality minimum requirements, for the mix of students and courses taught by a provider.

The assessment was carried out in 2022-23 by the TEF Panel, a panel of academics and students who are experts in learning and teaching. This document sets out a summary of the panel's findings and judgements.

The panel reviewed the following evidence:

- numerical indicators produced by the OfS, using national datasets
- a submission made by the provider, setting out its own evidence
- a submission made by the provider's students, setting out students' views.

The panel applied its expert judgement to:

- identify particular features of the student experience and student outcomes that are excellent (above the high quality baseline requirements)
- decide a rating for the 'student experience' and for 'student outcomes'
- decide an overall rating for the provider.

Throughout the assessment the panel took account of the context of the provider and judged how well it delivers teaching, learning and student outcomes for its mix of students and courses.

In making its decisions the panel took account of the OfS general duties and the public sector equalities duty.

Summary of panel assessment

Information about this provider

King's College London is a civic university with five campuses located in London and over 36,000 students. It is a multi-disciplinary, internationally renowned research-intensive university. The provider identifies itself as 'dedicated to driving positive and sustainable change in society and making the world a better place through pioneering education and research by bringing together academic staff and practitioners who are leading experts in their fields'.

The provider has intentionally increased both student numbers and the diversity of students in recent years. The latter is a direct result of a commitment to widening participation which has seen students from underrepresented groups increase from 38 per cent in 2018-19 to 48 per cent in 2021-22 and is now at 50 per cent. This includes students from low-income families, areas of low university participation, from minority ethnic backgrounds as well as students who are care-experienced e.g. those who have experienced local authority care at any stage of their lives, including those who have been adopted, students who are estranged, forced migrants or young carers.

The provider states that it attracts 'outstanding students from diverse backgrounds, who are challenged and supported to achieve excellent outcomes'. As a result, the extent to which the provider supports students from all backgrounds to succeed has been a material consideration in this assessment.

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 found the student experience is typically very high quality for the provider's mix of students and courses. Across the student experience aspect, the panel found:

- that the majority of features are very high quality and that this is evident across most groups of students, and for most courses and subjects
- one feature that is outstanding quality
- no features that it considered to be below the level of very high quality
- that the very high quality and outstanding features apply to all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups
- evidence that the provider is on a transition to better embed and tailor its approaches to improving the student experience.

There was no indicator evidence for part-time students and the panel therefore did not give any weight to the part-time student experience. The panel gave due weight to the student submission given its use of a range of credible sources.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and considered the best fit rating to be 'Silver'. This is because most features are at least very high quality for most groups of students and courses.

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

Teaching, assessment, and feedback; and Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The panel considered that both 'teaching, assessment and feedback' and 'course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch' are very high quality features.

The 'teaching on my course' indicator for full-time students provides initial evidence of a very high quality feature, although for 27.7 per cent of students on a range of courses there was evidence of not very high quality.

The 'assessment and feedback' indicator for full-time students provides initial evidence that the feature is not very high quality.

The provider and student submissions show a supportive picture in relation to teaching, course content and delivery and engagement in learning and stretch.

However, the student submission identifies several areas where the student experience requires attention, including the allocation of teaching to graduate teaching assistants and PhD students without adequate time and support and also teaching scheduling issues.

Acknowledging this, the new President has made student success the number one goal in the provider's 2026 strategy. The provider has introduced multiple new initiatives which address these issues directly, including:

- the embedding of student mental health and wellbeing into teaching, learning and student support
- significant investment into the organisation and management infrastructure, including timetabling, examinations and a new Curriculum Management System
- enhancing the role of senior tutor in departments to ensure much more comprehensive monitoring of students' academic progress, welfare and overall university experience.

The student submission identifies that feedback for summative assessments is usually timely, but there is variation across faculties in how students are supported to understand assessment criteria and the quality of the feedback. Students in Law reported receiving no feedback on any summative assessments and that requests for this feedback were declined over multiple years due to a lack of resource. The student submission also identifies concerns with mitigating circumstances but acknowledges that plans are in place to address these issues.

The provider acknowledges the challenges around 'assessment and feedback' and has taken action to address these, including:

- a new Marking and Assessment Framework for all students and programmes including a focus on Assessment for Learning
- the piloting of a revised Marking and Assessment Policy in three departments (War Studies, Global Health, and International Development) with 2022 assessment and feedback increasing results by 13 per cent, eight per cent, and two per cent to 74 per cent, 63 per cent and 68 per cent, respectively
- revised assessment criteria and rubrics following pilots with schools.

While the provider's action to address these issues is showing some early improvements in data, the panel also recognises that many initiatives are still in their infancy and are yet to deliver the desired impact.

The fact the student submission recognises the provider is taking action has also been given weight as well as the fact that the 'continuation', 'completion' and 'progression' rates show evidence of very high quality for all groups of students. This suggests that the elements of the student experience that require attention are not compromising student outcomes.

Noting that the indicators contributed no more than half of the evidence of excellence, the panel concluded that the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment. It also 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.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

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

The provider submission shows key evidence to support this and which suggests that the benefits extend to all student groups. The evidence includes:

- research-informed modules and programmes taught by world-leading researchers, industry experts and healthcare professionals
- a framework through which knowledge, attributes, skills and experiences sought by employers are embedded in the curriculum
- 70 programmes which are professionally accredited
- the King's 20 Accelerator to support entrepreneurship, resulting in 33 undergraduate and postgraduate students successful ventures.

Overall, the panel noted the provider is supporting and enriching the student experience by embedding key skills sought by employers into the curriculum as well as creating opportunities for developing research skills and entrepreneurial skills.

The panel concluded 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.

Staff professional development and academic practice

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

The panel found evidence in the provider submission that the provider supports the professional development of its staff and develops academic practice to support the student academic experience. Staff are well represented on key external bodies shaping higher education policy and provision. This evidence includes:

- all new academic staff completing the Learning and Teaching Programme to gain Higher Education Academy recognition, with the number of accredited staff being four per cent above the sector
- the King's Academy supporting staff with curriculum design and assessment, personal tutor training, professional development and recognition, digital innovation and inquiry, scholarship and research
- staff sharing their expertise by contributing to professional bodies for teaching and research across all disciplines.

Taking the evidence into account, the panel concluded that there is very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted.

Learning environment and academic support

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

The 'academic support' indicator for full-time students offers initial evidence that the feature is not very high quality.

However, there is extensive evidence in the provider submission that it has planned and provides a supportive learning environment and academic support for its mix of students, including those that can experience barriers to learning and success. Examples include:

- the King's Foundation Programme, which supports international students through tailored pathways. The provider notes that indicators show stronger 'continuation' and 'completion' for non-UK domiciled students than for UK domiciled
- increased bursaries and hardship funding reaching an annual expenditure of £10.3m in 2021-22, which includes subsidised food and an emergency fund for students struggling with the cost-of-living crisis
- support for disabled students through a Disability Adviser to draw up a 'King's Inclusion Plan' and the appointment of two Inclusive Education Student Partners in each faculty responsible for working with staff to draw up action plans
- investment in counselling and mental health support and the refocusing of the Student of Concern process.

The submission shows that the provider has a suite of universal and targeted initiatives, which are resulting in improvements in student views for academic support in some subject areas (e.g. Film Studies, Biomedical Engineering and Imaging Sciences, Law, Psychology) and satisfaction levels of 78 per cent in module evaluation data for academic support. However, the overall impact of the academic support provision across all programmes is not clearly evidenced.

Weighing up the evidence, 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 considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

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

However, several indicators for student groups and courses provide evidence of not very high quality 'learning resources', including students aged 31 and over, Chemistry, Nursing and Midwifery and Geography.

The evidence in the provider and student submissions demonstrates there is extensive provision of learning resources, including:

- course-specific facilities such as wet and dry labs, moot courts, simulation centres and a trading room for business students. The student submission cites investment in physical facilities as a success, with 82 per cent of students reporting they could access course-specific resources. However, there is some evidence in the student submission that the increase in student numbers and large cohorts had reduced access
- library facilities across the five campuses that are open seven days a week and 24 hours a day at key times of the year. Students can book group study rooms and assistive technology rooms. The student submission confirms the library and practical facilities are highly valued by students
- the Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning, which offers digital skills training, had 4,373 students enrolled as of September 2022 with 80 per cent of students surveyed reporting benefits.

The provider submission highlights the breadth of resources which are extensive, generally accessible and also targeted to the requirements of specific programmes. Considering the evidence in the round and,

noting that the indicators contributed no more than half of the evidence of excellence, the panel concluded that physical and virtual learning resources are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning.

Student engagement in improvement

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

The 'student voice' indicator for full-time students provides initial evidence of not very high quality.

According to the provider, students can make their views known through multiple channels, raising concerns and engaging in co-creative discussions that enhance their education. However, the student submission maintains that this is complex and results in varied relationships with 'some representatives feeling burnt out, under-appreciated, or under-prepared for these expectations.'

The student submission also points out that the lack of a university-wide strategy means that successful local initiatives do not always benefit other areas of the provider. The student submission describes how dissatisfaction with student voice is aligned with views on wider provider communications.

There is evidence that the provider has worked in partnership with the students' union and students to co-produce several key initiatives. There have been multiple outcomes of this, including:

- the 'student voice' 'Partnership Agreement' as part of the wider relationship with the students' union
- a review of all modules and programmes led by a 'Curriculum Commission'
- the design of library services resulting in extended opening hours, increased visibility of resources and guidance for staff on how to decolonise reading lists
- a reduction of the penalty on coursework submitted within 24 hours of a deadline to 10 numerical marks instead of a cap at the pass mark of 40 per cent
- the development the Essential Digital Skills programme in 2020.

The student submission, which in places highlights a poor student experience, has been given weight by the panel, especially as it draws on a range of evidence including student voice data. At the same time, the panel has given weight to the evidence in the provider submission highlighting efforts to improve the student voice which includes some examples of impact.

On balance, the panel concluded that the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students.

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 quality for the provider's mix of students and courses. Across the student outcomes aspect, the panel found:

- the majority of features are outstanding quality and this is across most groups of students and for most courses and subjects
- one feature is very high quality
- the outstanding and very high quality features apply to most of the provider's students, including those from underrepresented groups which comprise a sizeable proportion of the student body
- evidence of outstanding quality provision across most groups of students and for most courses.

The panel considered the evidence in the provider submission to be important to its assessment of the indicator evidence and features, including contextual evidence regarding the high proportion of students eligible for free school meals.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and considered the best fit rating to be 'Gold'. This is because the majority of the features are outstanding quality for most groups of students and courses. The panel did not think that 'Silver' would be the best fit because the evidence demonstrates that only one student outcomes feature is very high quality.

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.

Some of the supporting evidence for this has already been referenced in the student experience aspect and there are more examples below relating to supporting progression, including:

- an Employer Advisory Board which works with the careers service to keep knowledge of employer expectations up to date
- full daily programme of events, with speakers from government, the legal world, business and finance, the arts and other universities
- internships and other opportunities for students with the British Museum, British Library, the Science Museum, the Globe Theatre, the Royal Archives and Tate Modern
- a very significant and rich extra-curricular and co-curricular offering, which students rate very positively delivered through the Enterprise Award, King's Experience Awards and others.

The provider is ranked seventh in the UK for graduate employability (Global Employability University Ranking, THE, 2021). The student submission notes that the provider's outcomes are impressive and 'reflect the calibre of students that King's attracts, and its high academic standards and international reputation'.

The panel noted that the extent of the provision, the endorsement by the students' union in the student submission and the student outcome aspect indicators makes this feature among the very best in the sector.

Overall, the panel concluded that there was sufficient evidence to show that the provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The 'continuation' and 'completion' indicators for full-time students provide initial evidence of very high quality. For some groups of students and courses both indicators show evidence of an outstanding quality feature.

For part-time students the same indicators provide initial evidence of not very high quality.

The provider acknowledges the statistics for part-time students but says this is because practising nurses enrolling on free-standing modules who do not intend to continue are included in the indicator. Given the relatively high numbers of such nurses, the panel accepts this explanation.

Considering the student profile, the sizeable percentage of students from underrepresented backgrounds and the evidence in the round, the panel concluded that there are outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students of courses and that this is an outstanding quality feature.

Progression rates

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

The panel considered the 'progression' indicator to provide initial evidence of a very high quality feature for full-time students and an outstanding quality feature for part-time students.

Further statistical evidence shows that 'progression' outcomes for underrepresented groups are very high quality, including for mature students, disabled students, those from deprived areas, those who were eligible for free school meals and students from minority ethnic backgrounds. However, the data highlights some subjects that are below the level of very high quality for 'progression', including Physics, Chemistry and Pharmacology, but the panel noted that these are relatively small numbers and have been given less weight.

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

Intended educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

Examining the evidence in the provider and student submissions the panel noted that the provider seeks to support students not only to achieve academically but also to develop beyond the classroom as 'independent, critical thinkers willing to challenge dogma or injustice and to use their talents to inspire and improve the lives of others'.

The provider views educational gains 'as emerging from the intersection between curricular and co-curricular opportunities that allows the knowledge and skills developed in the classroom to be practiced, honed and applied in real-life scenarios' with a view to equipping students with the attributes sought by employers and which helps students to make a positive contribution to society.

Overall, the panel concluded 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 an outstanding quality feature.

Given the definition of educational gains above, the panel note that there is considerable evidence the provider supports students to achieve these gains. This is delivered both through the design of the curriculum, world class researchers delivering teaching, inclusive approaches to assessment and an extensive portfolio of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities where knowledge and skills can be acquired and applied.

Initiatives in addition to those already referenced in earlier sections to support educational gains include numerous opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in real-life scenarios. Examples include:

- the Associate of King's College London Award completed by 5,620 undergraduate students between 2019 and 2022.
- the Student Opportunity Fund which ensures that no student misses out through disadvantage, which is particularly relevant given the sizeable proportion of the student body from deprived backgrounds and eligible for free school meals
- law students providing free legal advice to members of the community via the King's Legal Clinic
- business students offering consultancy to organisations within local boroughs.

This panel noted that this provision is among the very best in the sector, for the mix of students and courses taught by the provider.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider's approaches to supporting its students to achieve these gains are evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to its students and their different starting points, and that this is an outstanding feature of the student outcomes aspect.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider does not explicitly describe a strategy for evaluating educational gains but there is evidence that all groups of students, with some exceptions for 'progression', achieve academically and are able to continue, complete and progress.

Many students engage in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities helping to develop the wider skills and attributes described by the provider. For example, over 80 per cent of students state that after completing the King's Civic Challenge their ability to recognise moral, ethical and social issues had improved and over 90 per cent reported increased confidence in their ability to make a difference to the world around them.

The panel concluded that the provider evaluates the gains made by its students, and demonstrates its students are succeeding in achieving the intended gains.

Overall: Silver

The panel rated the student experience aspect 'Silver' and the student outcomes aspect 'Gold'. The panel noted the guidance that the overall rating should not be higher than the highest aspect rating and should be no more than one rating higher than the lowest aspect rating.

The panel weighted these two aspects equally and considered all the evidence across all features and across all the provider's student groups, subjects and courses to come to a 'best fit' decision regarding the overall rating for the provider. The panel recommended the 'best fit' for the overall rating is 'Silver'.

In reaching this decision, the panel considered there to be compelling evidence that the outstanding and very high quality features apply to most of the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups which comprise a sizeable proportion of the provider's students. The panel considered this contextual factor throughout its assessment of all of the evidence.