



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

BIMM University Limited

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Bronze

Typically, the experience students have at BIMM University Limited 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 are some very high quality features.

Very high quality features include:

- research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement that contributes to a very high quality academic experience for students
- very high quality support for staff and professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted across the provider.

Student outcomes: Bronze

Student outcomes are typically high quality, and there are some very high quality features.

Very high quality features include:

- effective support for students to progress beyond their studies
- very high rates of successful progression for the providers 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

BIMM University Limited consists of fourteen colleges spread across several UK and international locations (London, Brighton, Manchester, Bristol, Birmingham, Dublin and Berlin). It is a specialist institution focusing on the creative industries with courses in performing arts, popular music and filmmaking courses that are vocational in nature.

The provider states that its purpose and vision are to 'inspire the next generation of industry professionals through the creation of inclusive and creative learning environments' which removes barriers and creates equal opportunities. Additionally, the provider states that it wishes to 'provide the highest standard of industry-led education, built on a foundation of collaboration, inclusivity and an entrepreneurial spirit' with a focus on preparing students for a 'substantiable career' in music, performing arts or filmmaking.

The provider describes itself as a medium-sized higher education provider and has around 9,000 students across its further education and higher education provision. The provider was granted Taught Degree Awarding Powers in March 2019 but has provided creative industry education and training for more than 40 years.

Most of the providers' students are aged 21 and under on course entry and the majority of students are white.

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.

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

- two features are very high quality
- five features where there is not enough evidence of very high quality
- no features clearly below the level of 'high quality' or that may be of concern.

The panel applied the criteria and found the best fit rating to be 'Bronze'. This is because some features of the aspect are very high quality for most groups of students. The panel did not think that 'Requires Improvement' would be the best fit because there were no features clearly below the level of high quality, or that may be of concern. The panel's assessment of the student experience features is set out below.

Teaching, assessment, and feedback

The panel judged there was not enough evidence of very high quality for this feature.

The indicators provide compelling initial evidence of below very high quality 'teaching on my course' for full-time students, although there is evidence of outstanding quality for Business and Management students, and very high quality for Media, Journalism and Communications students.

The 'assessment and feedback' indicator does not provide initial evidence of very high quality as there is not enough certainty in the data.

The provider submission offers further evidence, which includes:

- a higher education strategy which sets out a commitment to adopting 'best practices and current research' and assessments which are 'fair, relevant, authentic, collaborative, diverse, inclusive and accessible'. To achieve these aims, there are governance processes for quality assurance which aim to oversee delivery of teaching against the higher education strategy
- how the quality assurance and compliance committee oversee processes for 'quality assurance of the student experience' with particular regard for the NSS and Module Evaluation Surveys (MES). The submission notes that MES's were undertaken for every module in 2020-21 within which 83 per cent of students were 'satisfied with their experience of the modules they had taken' and a high satisfaction rate for 'satisfaction with teaching'
- that there was collaboration during the coronavirus pandemic with Advance HE to create a new assessment approach.

External examiners have endorsed this new rubric stating that ‘students get a lot of feedback here, both general and specific. Very good practice’. NSS scores are used to show improvement in assessment and feedback after a new strategy was put in place to ‘improve assessment literacy’.

The student submission notes that students would like more classes and that different campuses have different approaches to contact hours.

The panel considered the indicators and the evidence in the provider and student submissions. It acknowledged that while there is variation, in general the ‘teaching on my course’ and ‘assessment and feedback’ indicators do not provide sufficient evidence of very high quality. The panel judged that despite the mitigations and evidence outlined in the submission there was little evidence that the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, assessment and feedback practices that are effective in supporting students learning, progression and attainment. The panel therefore judged there was not enough evidence of very high quality.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The panel judged there was not enough evidence of very high quality for this feature.

The provider submission frames engagement and stretch within the context of attendance and completion. The submission presents data on attendance within the first five weeks and suggests that students with missed attendance in this period are offered additional targeted support. From this, the provider has created an initiative called the ‘curriculum spine’ through which they intend to provide a ‘consistent, connected, scaffolded undergraduate learning experience’. The ‘curriculum spine’ recognises the different starting points of individual students and allows them to ‘travel at a suitable pace’ with support offered. The panel considered that little evidence was given to demonstrate the effectiveness of this initiative, nor whether students were engaged with it.

Further evidence within the provider submission includes:

- that the ‘curriculum spine’ model creates a personal and professional development portfolio for each student to, ‘put the student and the creative industries at the heart of the curriculum’. No evidence is provided on the effectiveness of this model
- that student satisfaction with ‘organisation and management’ declined during the coronavirus pandemic. The provider suggests this is due to their context as a ‘practice-based’ specialist provider and provided remote support via software and hardware for students to use at home.

The student submission notes that 70 per cent of students have booked a tutorial with a lecturer, though only 49 per cent rated this process as either easy or somewhat easy.

The panel considered there was little evidence that was relevant to this feature as the provider focused on strategy and attendance. There was not enough evidence that course content and delivery effectively encourage the provider’s student to engage in their learning and stretch students to develop their knowledge and skills. The panel therefore did not find enough evidence of very high quality.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

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

The provider submission contextualises employer engagement and professional practice within the need to 'increase diversity and support self-employment', in particular the students' need to transition into the creative industries. Given the context of the provider and its vocational courses, the panel judged this to be an appropriate and strong approach.

Further evidence in the provider submission includes:

- a programme which provides training, coaching and funding for entrepreneurial projects designed by students from under-represented groups. The panel judged the course was comprehensive and allowed for strong development
- that the provider has negotiated a partnership with Spotify to 'further promote diversity, inclusion and employability' offering funded degrees and educational resources
- that research, scholarship and enterprise are promoted through the research and enterprise committee, which created the research and enterprise strategy, focussing on creativity and practice-based research to challenge and improve pedagogy. Several aims have been developed in relation to findings
- that many staff manage professional creative industry careers alongside teaching and work as 'dual-identify professionals'.

The student submission noted that extracurricular activities are promoted within the institution which add to the academic experience. There is an 'exclusive social networking platform' for music students and graduates. The student submission notes a desire for additional classes, and further collaboration opportunities between students and industry professionals.

The panel considered the context of the provider and its vocational approach to courses and specialisation. Under this consideration, the strong focus on self-employment and links with employers, alongside research into teaching methods and practice-based courses, demonstrate sufficient evidence of very high quality provision. The panel judged that the focus on and approach to underrepresented groups was particularly commendable, and that 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. This feature was not considered to be of outstanding quality by the panel, as they did not consider that it had sufficiently demonstrated how these practices contribute to an outstanding academic experience for students.

Staff professional development and academic practice

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

The provider submission states that it is 'committed to continually enhancing learning and teaching to benefit students and staff', with a focus on continuing professional development as aligned with its higher education strategy.

The academic staff development plan sets out four objectives:

- to ensure the induction of lecturers is effective
- to support lecturers in the delivery of online learning
- to facilitate continuous professional development for academic staff
- to improve assessment literacy of staff and students.

The provider offered the following evidence in relation to these aims and general staff professional development:

- many staff are professional creative industries practitioners, managing successful portfolio careers. Those that do not hold teaching qualifications are supported via the Introduction to Learning and Teaching in Higher Education programme staff have the option to be enrolled onto the PG Cert Learning and Teaching (Professional Practice) course, with 278 achieving this qualification since 2011
- Fellowship awards have grown. Since obtaining Degree Awarding Powers in 2019, the provider has grown from ten Fellows to 83
- staff are given 15 days of professional practice leave per year
- the postgraduate funding scheme that allows for staff to receive financial support to undertake postgraduate courses. Over 100 staff have benefitted from this provision so far.

The panel judged that these provisions - including funding, time and staff enrolment on postgraduate courses, are clearly effective given the increase in staff which hold Level 7 and 8 qualifications. The panel judged the provider's approach to hiring staff was commendable as they look for industry specialisation and knowledge, then support staff to gain the appropriate qualifications.

The panel concluded that there is very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted across the institution. Accordingly, the panel judged this was a very high quality feature. The feature is not outstanding as the panel judged the provisions offered were not in themselves outstanding.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel judged there was not enough evidence of very high quality within this feature.

The indicator provided initial evidence that 'academic support' is not very high quality for full-time students. For Business and Management and Media, Journalism and Communications students there is evidence of outstanding 'academic support'.

The provider submission provides further evidence, which includes:

- NSS scores which show a drop of just over 10 per cent during the coronavirus pandemic, which is recognised by the provider. This is explained both by the context of the pandemic, and because of a resource shift into remote teaching. Although the panel noted that there is no comment on how the provider sought to maintain academic support during the pandemic period

- attendance data that is collected and monitored, with students who fail to attend or engage in the first five weeks given targeted interventions, though the provider notes that 'a more targeted and effective approach is needed'
- that there is a focus on equity, diversity and inclusion, though this is discussed within the context of entrepreneurial programmes and governance strategies.

The student submission notes that 70 per cent of students surveyed 'felt supported in the learning environment. 79 per cent felt comfortable asking questions of their lecturers and 88 per cent had received constructive feedback when they had asked for additional support.

The student submission also notes a strong student services team which offers advice on diverse aspects of the student experience.

The panel considered the evidence from the indicators and submissions. The indicator data does not provide evidence of very high quality, and panel found that the provider submission only includes limited additional evidence. There is no consideration or explanation of the low indicator scores for Performing Arts students within the provider submission. Whilst there is some positive data provided by the student submission, which was taken into consideration by the panel, the panel judged there was not enough 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 judged that there was not enough evidence of very high quality within this feature.

The indicator provided initial evidence of not very high quality 'learning resources' for full-time students.

The provider submission provides further evidence, which includes:

- a digital hybrid campus that is being continually developed with the aim to improve student's digital literacy where 'students can access cutting-edge specialist teaching and learning resources that reflect industry requirements.' To support this assertion, the provider presents external examiner comments which note the 'fantastic, state-of-the-art equipment'. The provider notes that students have access to 'acoustically treated rehearsal/practice studios and performance space, industry standard-recording studios, post-production suites and editing studios' amongst other facilities
- that the governing body approved over £30 million of investment for funding into enhancing facilities in existing colleges and to establish new colleges
- that students can perform in world-class public venues in the cities in which they are studying, including the O2 Shephard's Bush Empire, The Dance House in Manchester and at various festivals.

The student submission notes that 80 per cent of students felt they had access to all the resources they needed to be able to do well on their course. However, several responses raised issues of performance and practice space, digital resources, equipment, inadequate booking systems for

equipment, a desire for more library resources. Whilst there are clearly strong, industry-quality facilities at certain locations and impressive performance facilities which students can access, the panel considered whether these were consistent across all locations and for all groups of students.

The panel noted additional funding to improve the consistency of resources across campuses. The student submission highlights several areas which require improvement including booking systems, studio spaces and digital resources. These concerns are reflected in the indicator data which is not very high quality.

Looking at the evidence holistically, and making a judgement based on all the evidence, the panel noted the impressive performance opportunities, and facilities at some locations however, given the context of the provider as a multi-site institution with specialist courses, inconsistency in resources across campuses and concerns from students within the student submission meant the panel judged that there was not enough evidence physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel did not find enough evidence of very high quality for this feature.

The indicator provides initial evidence of not very high quality 'student voice'. There is evidence of outstanding quality for Business and Management students, and Media, Journalism and communications students.

Further evidence in the provider submission includes:

- that NSS results are down more than 12.2 per cent from prior to the coronavirus pandemic. The provider contextualises this within the pandemic and the resource reallocation towards remote teaching
- that a sub-group of the equity, diversity and inclusion learning and teaching working group is tasked with capturing the student voice, though this is from 'colleagues' and not students directly
- that the student submission has been collated by student representatives, highlighting that these positions exist at each college.

The student submission notes that 87 per cent of students felt heard and listened to by staff on campus. 76 per cent said they had given feedback about their experience before and 66 per cent were happy with the outcome as a result of this.

The student submission highlights a quote from a student that states 'the student association is a great first step in connecting students with opportunities on their campuses'. However, this quote goes on to note that 'a university-wide Student Union would really help to bridge the gaps between students and staff and ensure that the student voice is heard all the time and not just when it comes to creating feedback for reports'. The panel considered that this quote, though only one student opinion, raised questions on whether the student voice was always considered by the provider.

Overall, that panel considered the small amount of evidence in relation to student engagement and improvement within the provider submission, and the evidence from the indicator and found there was not enough evidence the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvement to the experiences and outcomes of its students.

Student outcomes: Bronze

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 student outcomes are typically high quality, and there are some very high quality features, for the provider's mix of students and courses. Across the student outcomes aspect, the panel found:

- one feature that is very high quality with outstanding elements
- one feature that is very high quality
- four features where there is not enough evidence of very high quality.

The panel applied the criteria and found the best fit rating to be 'Bronze'. This is because some features of the aspect are very high quality for most groups of students. The panel did not think that 'Requires Improvement' would be the best fit because there were more than 'minimal' very high quality features.

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

Approaches to supporting student success

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

The provider offers vocationally focused courses to prepare students for careers in the creative industries.

The provider submission provides evidence of how it supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies. This includes:

- that the provider has several very strong partnerships within the creative industries including Sony Music, Warner Music Group, the Performing Rights Society and the Royal Shakespeare Company. These partnerships create many opportunities for students to meet and engage with future employers and perform at impressive venues across the country. Additionally, the provider's strong links with industry partners allows them to follow industry patterns and respond to changing industry expectations
- that the provider's employer partnerships allow students to work in a variety of roles and with a variety of employers to gain crucial work experience in the creative industries. Strong

evidence is provided of positive experiences students have gained, including securing employment at partnership events and contacts within the industry

- a focused recruitment service for final year students which helps secure professional employment. This is done through the provider's employer partnerships
- that it operates a performing arts talent agency to support students to establish their performing arts careers. 200 performance opportunities are managed every year, with 800 students successfully placed in productions
- the creation of a dedicated digital online platform for job searching within the creative industries, currently serving over 12,700 students and alumni. This programme was awarded first place in Outstanding Marketing Content category by Graduway.

The student submission notes a growth in students feeling ready for employment across the time series with 42 per cent of MA students feeling ready for employment compared with 25 per cent of Year 1 students.

The panel noted that, despite the opportunities noted by the provider submission for students to engage with employment, the student submission noted that only 30 per cent of students said their studies had led to career opportunities. A higher number, 68 per cent, stated that studying at the provider has made them feel more motivated in their career.

The panel considered the evidence from provider and student submission and judged that the provider effectively supports its students to progress beyond their studies, and there is some evidence to demonstrate how they support students to succeed in their studies. The panel considered the partnerships with employers and the opportunities for students within these (particularly work placements) to be of outstanding quality. The panel did not assess this feature to be outstanding overall as it judged the provider's approach to supporting students in their studies was not fully addressed by the provider's submission, and questions were raised about the reach of these employment opportunities and how much they apply to all students. The panel therefore judged that this feature was of very high quality, with outstanding elements.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel did not find enough evidence of very high quality within this feature.

The indicators provide initial evidence of:

- not very high quality 'continuation' for full-time students
- not very high quality 'completion' for full-time students.

The provider recognises these low indicator scores within its submission and notes that the university audit committee has identified continuation and completion as 'an area for ongoing monitoring'. Several areas have been identified for review and enhancement.

Following this investigation, a new project has been established to improve continuation and completion rates with targets set out and several objectives with specific actions detailed. These include development of an academic framework that promotes a learning culture, creating an

assessment culture that values risk-taking, creativity and real-world authenticity; and ensuring the curriculum supports diverse student demographics.

The panel considered the evidence from the indicators and provider submission. The panel noted the provider's recognition of low continuation and completion rates, and the positive steps taken to tackle these, though these are not yet reflected in the data. Overall, given the low rates of continuation and completion, the panel did not find enough evidence of very high quality within this feature.

Progression rates

The panel judged that this feature was very high quality.

The indicators provide initial evidence of very high quality 'progression' for full-time students.

The student submission notes that students feel more ready for employment the further into their studies they were. 30 per cent of students surveyed said their studies have led to career opportunities, and 68 per cent said that studying at the provider has made them feel more motivated in their career.

The panel considered that evidence and found the provider's focus on employability - particularly regarding its strong employer partnerships and careers service leads to high rates of successful progression for the providers students and courses. Overall, the panel judged that this feature was very high quality.

Intended educational gains

The panel judged that there was not enough evidence of very high quality within this feature.

The provider's submission does not formally articulate educational gains. However, the panel noted that the provider submission sets out the values it wishes to instil into its graduates, which are for students to be:

- employable and entrepreneurial
- resilient and adaptable
- creative, collaborative and connected
- globally aware and socially responsible
- intellectually curious and self-aware.

The panel noted that these values do align, at points, with educational gains within the provider submission, particularly with regards to employability and career-readiness as teaching is geared towards 'industry focussed education'. The relevance of these gains for students is implied, rather than described in the submission.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel judged that the values the provider wishes its students to gain do not evidence how the provider articulates educational gains or why these are

relevant to its students. The panel therefore judged that there was not enough evidence of very high quality within this feature.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

The panel did not find enough evidence of very high quality within this feature.

The panel could not find evidence of support with regards to educational gains outside of the context of employability. Whilst there is a clear focus on instilling employability within its students, no other values noted above are discussed within the provider submission in the context of educational gains.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel judged there was not enough evidence of very high quality within this feature.

The panel found little evidence of how the provider evaluates the gains made by its students, other than monitoring of NSS results and their future employment.

Overall: Bronze

Applying the guidance and the panel members' expert judgment, the panel considered the overall 'best fit' rating to be 'Bronze'. The panel considered both the student experience and outcomes aspect rating to be 'Bronze'.

In reaching this decision, the panel considered both aspects are typically high quality, and there were some very high quality features.