



# **Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023**

## **Summary TEF 2023 panel statement**

**University of East London**

# Summary of outcomes

## Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at University of East London and the outcomes it leads to are very high quality.

### 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 to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for its students
- support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted
- a supportive learning environment, where staff have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support.

### Student outcomes: Silver

Student outcomes are typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- very high rates of continuation for the provider's students and courses
- very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses
- articulation of educational gains
- approaches to supporting educational gains
- evaluation of educational gains

There are also outstanding quality features including:

- approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- outstanding rates of completion for its 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

The University of East London says it prides itself on being ‘the people’s university’ with a 125-year heritage and a commitment to ‘addressing health and economic inequality wherever found’.

The provider’s mission is ‘transformative’ and based around shared values of ‘embracing diversity, equity and inclusion; courage by taking ownership of challenges and problems and following through on resolution’. It has three campuses located in the London Borough of Newham.

The provider had 17,370 students in 2020-21. In the submission it notes that it is in an area that has very large health inequalities and borough-wide child poverty rates of 49 per cent (14 percentage points above the average rate of all London boroughs). There are high rates of students from deprived backgrounds at 58.2 per cent of undergraduates.

The assessment considered information about the provider’s undergraduate courses and students on those courses. This includes any higher education course at undergraduate level (whether that course is recognised for OfS funding or not), and with any volume of learning, that leads to a qualification, students taught by a provider, as well as students registered by the provider but taught by another provider through a sub-contractual arrangement and international students taught within the UK.

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/](http://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/](http://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 quality of the student academic experience is high quality for the provider's mix of students and courses.

The panel found:

- three features to be of very high quality
- four features where there was not enough evidence of very high quality.

The evidence demonstrates there are only three very high quality features in the student experience aspect. The panel concluded that all the evidence 'best fits' with the description 'most features of the aspect are very high quality for some groups of students' and concluded the overall rating of 'Bronze' was the best fit.

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

### **Teaching, assessment, and feedback**

The panel found that there was insufficient evidence of very high quality for teaching, assessment and feedback.

The evidence from the indicators showed:

- that 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' for full-time students are typically very high quality, but not for all students and courses
- that for part-time and for 'other' undergraduate students, 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' are not very high quality.

Additional evidence in the provider submission included developments and innovations made during the pandemic, including augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) facilitation of engagements.

The student submission highlights that assessment and feedback policies are 'alternative and innovative' in approach, but these provisions can sometimes be 'inconsistent and impersonal.' It details changes to the assessment and feedback policy to include alternative assessments as standard rather than requiring students with additional needs to specifically request alternatives. It also notes that the provider has invested in a new system for feedback.

The panel found both submissions present some strong evidence of innovative assessment and feedback. However, the panel judged that this very high quality was not sustained across the feature, noting the provider had not addressed disparities across courses. Additionally, the student submission raised questions over the consistency of the provider's approach. The panel therefore judged that there was insufficient evidence of very high quality.

## **Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch**

The panel considered that there is insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

The provider's submission does not address course content in detail but provides extensive evidence of its commitment to embedding employability throughout its curriculum.

The provider submission includes the following evidence:

- a commitment to professional practice within learning and employer engagement
- progress on degree awarding gaps as evidence of the impact of its approach to inclusive learning and teaching
- the student submission showed appreciation for the changing of assessments as a matter of course for students who require alternative arrangements
- compelling evidence provided by external examiner comments that note 'assessment methods stretch students to perform above threshold levels'.

Overall, the panel considered that many of the statements made by the provider in its submission were unsubstantiated. Therefore, the panel found that the provider has not given enough evidence that this feature is consistently of a very high quality.

## **Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement**

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

With its ethos as a 'careers-first' university, the provider seeks to embed employer engagement across its courses. Evidence from the provider and student submissions includes:

- evidence in the student submission of students welcoming increased activities, such as visits to employers, in response to their feedback
- 'Mental Wealth and Professional Fitness' in all courses are innovative and recognised as such through positive feedback, awards, and student endorsements
- over 100 Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies accreditations effectively cover the diverse curriculum
- partnerships support experiential learning
- research institutes offer students the chance to engage with applied research on carbon neutrality
- AR and VR tech enhance student engagement and digital fluency
- strong commitment to innovative teaching is shown through frequent assessments of teaching methods.

Overall, the panel found this feature to be very high quality as courses are clearly research-led, good practices are shared, and employer engagement is strong.

### **Staff professional development and academic practice**

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

The provider states that it tailors staff development in response to the nature of its student population and academic needs. Evidence includes:

- staff development on projects including 'trauma informed practice' and 'coaching for academic success' have had a positive effect on continuation and contributed to outstanding completion
- equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) training for staff, recognising the diversity of the student cohort and demonstrating that excellent academic practice is promoted
- an early adopter of the UK Professional Standards Framework with staff achieving Higher Education Academy status through this scheme
- a focus on sustainable growth supported by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching where staff can share celebrate and learn from good practice.

Overall, staff development projects are thematic and contribute to their development with a number of examples of quality educational research included in the provider submission. The provider links EDI training to its mix of students, demonstrating a tailored approach with an understanding of its students. The panel therefore found this feature to be very high quality.

### **Learning environment and academic support**

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

The 'academic support' indicator does not give enough evidence of very high quality for part-time students but shows some evidence of high quality for some full-time students. The provider identifies underperformance in academic support in Medical Science, Psychology, Nursing, and Health and Social Care.

The provider details a tailored approach to learning and engagement, with numerous services in place for students to track their progress and develop skills, with one-to-one tutoring offered in addition to regular teaching.

The provider submitted robust and persuasive evidence that clearly demonstrated evidence-based policies and practices directly relevant to academic support tailored appropriately to students. Evidence in the provider submission included the following:

- Careers and Student Enterprise, and Student Engagement and Success Teams who work with all students (but particularly those identified as vulnerable) from analytics leading to improved outcomes for students who engage with the services
- support during coronavirus utilising digital placement platforms and additional support for mature students entering university

- 'Track My Future' identifies support needs with personalised dashboards
- the work of the Disability and Dyslexia Team is rated as excellent by the student submission
- £2 million hardship funds for allocation during the TEF time period. This includes provision of IT systems for students in digital poverty.

The panel found the student submission to be persuasive in its breadth of evidence and strong representation of different student groups. It notes that the Academic Advisor scheme is well received when in place, but that it is inconsistent across schools and that students do not know what is expected of them. It was positive around support during coronavirus, particularly regarding academic support. However, the submission notes that 23 per cent of students felt lecturers took too long to respond to them.

Overall, the panel considered the provider clearly fosters a supportive learning environment with a range of very high quality academic support and judged this feature to be very high quality.

## **Learning resources**

The panel found that there was insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

The indicators provide initial evidence of not very high quality 'learning resources' for both full-time and part-time students. The provider submission noted that supply and demand issues post-pandemic have prevented it from supplying the standard of resources it would expect to provide.

Further evidence includes:

- substantial investment has been made in the provider's 'Connected Campus' and 'Digital First' projects to create 'cutting edge teaching and learning spaces'
- the student submission notes 'almost exclusively positive' feedback from students enjoying refurbished spaces, but less so where investment has not yet been made. It also describes equitable access to library spaces which were improved in response to National Student Survey data
- investment in infrastructure underpins key successes, suggesting that some modest increases in 'learning opportunities' and 'learning community' National Student Survey results are evidence of this impact
- there is a focus on equitable access and a desire to keep the library services open as much as possible
- an online Library chat platform increases the visibility of online support for students, with 10,396 chats. The student submission suggests student opinion on this feature is 'almost exclusively positive' after much investment has been carried out
- the provider identifies a range of 'centres of excellence' in which students gain 'real-life experience and training' and provides good evidence that these are appreciated by students.

The panel considered that while physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively at points to support very high quality learning and teaching, it is not consistent. For this reason, the panel concluded that there is insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

### **Student engagement in improvement**

The panel found that there was insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

The 'student voice' indicator suggests initial evidence of very high quality for some full-time and part-time students but notes a large number of courses where there is evidence of not very high quality.

Further evidence by the provider includes:

- student representation at the Board of Governors, Academic Board and the Education and Experience Committee.
- engagement with students to understand the lived experience at university of Global Ethnic Minority students and spread awareness with staff
- course representatives meet regularly with the staff, though the student submission notes that appointment of these is inconsistent and 'takes too long', delaying training.

The panel noted the student submission draws attention to the unevenness in the quality of the provider's engagement with its students, highlighting some elements (such as engagement with course representatives), as slow or ineffective.

The panel weighted the student submission heavily given its strong representation of various student groups and its robust evidence-gathering methodology. Additionally, the panel considered that some of the evidence of the provider submission is unsubstantiated or fails to be linked with demonstrable effects. Taking account of all the evidence in the round, the panel found that there was insufficient evidence of very high quality across this feature.

### **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:

- one outstanding feature
- one feature to be split between outstanding and high quality
- four features of very high quality.

The panel did not consider 'Gold' to be the best fit because the panel assessed 'most' of the features to be very high quality, rather than outstanding. The panel found 'Silver' to be a better fit

because the evidence demonstrates that most features of the aspect are very high quality for all groups of students.

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

### **Approaches to supporting student success**

The panel considered this feature to be outstanding.

The provider has a clear focus on health gain as a prerequisite to learning gain, evidenced by awards of the University Mental Health Charter. The provider asserts it adopts a 'highly personalised approach' which embeds successful approaches to students' progression and continuation. Evidence from the submission includes the following:

- the 'MyFeedback' and the 'Track My Future' dashboard are both effective tools with a six per cent increase in average grades for students who used these alongside sessions for academic skills
- The Graduate Employability Framework aims to enhance career activity relevant to subject and level
- investment in various Centres of Excellence, which are venues dedicated to bringing together employers, businesses and investors, and to offer students the chance to gain real-life experience and training. The student submission notes that students are generally positive about this feature, with strong qualitative evidence provided by the student submission where departments 'cooperate with ... professionals who actively work in the industry' allowing students to see how an industry works
- the CareerZone provides comprehensive support for students, as evidenced in student reviews.

The panel found the evidence provided on the Centres of Excellence to be particularly compelling. With this in mind, and the strong student feedback evidenced in both submissions regarding support for career outcomes, there was strong evidence the provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies. The panel concluded that this feature is outstanding.

### **Continuation and completion rates**

This panel found this feature to be very high quality for continuation and outstanding quality for completion.

The 'continuation' indicator gave initial evidence of very high quality for most full-time and part-time students. The 'completion' indicator gave initial evidence of outstanding quality for most full-time and part-time students.

The panel concluded the vast majority of continuation rates are of very high quality and completion rates are outstanding almost across the board. Therefore, this led the panel to conclude that this feature is split with very high quality rates of continuation and outstanding rates of completion.

## **Progression rates**

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

There is very strong evidence of very high quality progression rates for the provider's full-time students. However, the part-time indicator for 'progression' is not very high quality. The provider details how it tackles lower progression rates within areas where it has lower rates. Evidence in the provider submission includes:

- how the CareerZone platform (along with other careers and employability approaches) has helped to improve rates of progression
- detailed action plans have been introduced at course level for lower-scoring areas. The submission also provides information on partner organisations who provide training and work-based experiences to students underrepresented in their chosen sectors.

While indicators for part-time students' progression are worse, less weight has been placed on this evidence as the number of students is much smaller in comparison to full-time students. Additionally, the panel considered that the provider submission provides strong evidence of a positive trajectory regarding progression. In particular, the panel notes the provider's adoption of long-term action plans and monitoring to support its policies and practices. Therefore, the panel found that this feature is of very high quality.

## **Intended educational gains**

The panel judged this feature to be very high quality.

The provider defines a mission to sustainably champion the social mobility and life chances of its students, with a 'careers-first approach'. Additionally, the provider describes 'Vision 2028' which aims to 'make a positive difference to student and graduate success'. It also details recent awards it has received around employability strategies. There is a clear commitment to careers-focused education, with 'enterprise education' and 'real world experiential learning' well demonstrated with the Centres of Excellence, partnerships (such as with the Victoria and Albert Museum for BA Architecture students) and enterprising ideas embedded into learning.

The provider undertakes extensive analysis of its own student demographics to articulate what it believes to be an impact on social mobility (e.g. awards and progression improvement).

The panel judged that there is a clear conception of social mobility and progression embedded within the provision, and this is articulated within the submission. The panel judged that this feature is very high quality.

## **Approaches to supporting educational gains**

The panel considered this feature to be of very high quality

The provider recognises the 'unique life circumstances' of its students and has in place bespoke systems and interventions to ensure its students' progress in relation to its approaches to supporting educational gains. Evidence of this in the submission includes:

- interventions with tutoring support are fully embedded and effectively reach students, with 22,508 such interventions in 2021-22
- a 'Track my Future' platform is bespoke and tailors interventions to certain demographics recognised as particularly vulnerable or struggling such as mature students with financial or care responsibilities, including contributions to family household expenditure
- students with disabilities are particularly well supported, with staff development in neurodiversity training and an in-house dyslexia and disability team
- alumni mentoring schemes are specially adapted to meet the need to 'recruit based on skills' with a recruitment practice called Talent Hack
- Practice Based Centres have been created to provide students with opportunities to learn practical skills alongside their studies, including legal advice clinics, a tax and accountancy clinic and a business advice clinic. This is backed by submissions made in the student video where students talk of their appreciation for links with industry contacts and mentoring schemes.

The student submission notes that the provider offers free careers and enterprise support for alumni for life. It goes on to note an appreciation of the Mental Health and Professional Fitness module provisions embedded into every course, with student satisfaction with this module at 88 per cent positive in the most recent Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ).

On the strength of this evidence, particularly with regard to tailored interventions, the panel considered this feature to be of very high quality.

### **Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains**

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality

The provider submission included the following evidence:

- an annual graduate employability action plan ensures the provider fully evaluates the impact of its framework for graduate progression
- engagement with the careers management zone and dashboards is monitored, and students are advised about their personalised careers dashboard. Improved graduate outcomes have followed in line with the Vision 2028 strategy
- individual needs have been recognised, with paid work experience through a funded internship to aid those with little financial resources, and with alumni and professional mentoring.

Overall, the panel considered that the provider evaluates the educational gains made by its students and found this to be a very high quality feature.

## **Overall: Silver**

The panel found the student experience aspect rating to be 'Bronze' and the student outcomes aspect rating to be 'Silver'. The panel considered all the evidence and judged the overall 'best fit' rating to be 'Silver'.

The panel found that throughout the student outcomes aspect, and within a considerable number of student experience features, the provider submission presents clear and robust evidence of very high quality in its policies, practices, and approaches, which meet the needs of nearly all of its student groups and courses. Therefore, the panel did not feel that a 'Bronze' overall rating was appropriate.

The panel found the 'best fit' descriptor to be that 'across all the available evidence the student experience and student outcomes are typically very high quality' and considered the best fit was a 'Silver' overall rating.