



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

Colchester Institute

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Requires improvement

Improvement is required to be awarded a TEF rating.

Student experience: Requires improvement

Improvement is required to be awarded a TEF rating for this aspect.

There are no very high quality features, and the panel found two features to be clearly below the level of very high quality.

Student outcomes: Requires improvement

Improvement is required to be awarded a TEF rating for this aspect.

There are not enough very high quality features to be awarded a TEF rating.

There is one very high quality feature:

- very high 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.

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 provider describes its courses as primarily vocational programmes, focusing on the local community, industry, and creative technologies. Since 2019, courses have been validated by three partners.

The provider had 560 full-time and 150 part-time undergraduates in 2020-21. Over the TEF period, there has been a reduction in student numbers as a result of a managed reduction in the number of students taught through sub-contractors and resulting from the teaching-out of some courses. There has also been a reduction in the number of HNC and HND programmes.

There is a focus on arts, social sciences and applied technologies. The provider submission states that there has been a move away from some arts provision. New top-up degree programmes in engineering and sports coaching have been introduced during the TEF period.

The provider submission states that approximately two-thirds of students are over the age of 24 and 70 per cent of students commute from up to 25 miles to the campus. The provider submission states that the provider is close to some of the most economically deprived areas in England. It states that 45 per cent of students are from areas which have the lowest higher education participation rates. 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: Requires improvement

Throughout this section, we refer to indicators. These indicators are based on students' responses to the National Student Survey. The indicators are 'benchmarked' to show how well the provider performs for its particular mix of students and courses.

Across the student experience aspect, the panel found:

- insufficient evidence of any very high quality features
- two features which are clearly below the level of very high quality.

The panel applied the criteria, and determined the outcome to be that the provider requires improvement for the award of a TEF rating. This is because there are no very high quality features for this aspect.

The panel noted some efforts by the provider to mitigate issues regarding the two features found to be clearly below the level of very high quality, which have not yet had the opportunity to impact these features. As such, the panel did not consider these features to be of concern in its assessment.

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

Teaching, assessment, and feedback

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

The indicators provide evidence that:

- 'teaching on my course' is very high quality for full-time students, with variation for different subjects and student groups
- 'assessment and feedback' is either very high quality or outstanding quality for full-time students, with not enough certainty in the data to say which applies.

The panel placed less weight on the part-time 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' indicators because they covered a much smaller student population than the full-time indicator.

The panel considered the evidence in the provider submission, and found limited evidence of very high quality practice. Evidence includes:

- the introduction of the flexible teaching and learning plan and details of its response to the National Student Survey
- description of an integrated approach to learning support, including new roles and consolidation of support for disabled students
- use of assessment rubrics and improved feedback to students, which are supported by some external examiner comments. The panel considered that there was limited evidence of how embedded these approaches are

The panel found limited evidence that the provider tailors its approaches to its mix of students, or of the impact of its interventions or how embedded good practice is. Whilst the panel found evidence in the indicators that performance was broadly in line with benchmark, it considered that supplementary evidence in the submission was limited. In the round, the panel considered that there was insufficient evidence that the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that they are effective in supporting students' learning.

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 evidence includes:

- reference to staff moving session content between lectures, small group work, discussion forums and individual input. A student comment is presented in support of this, but there is no evidence of an overarching strategy
- students are able to enrol in other modules outside of their core course content as an enrichment activity, although there is no evidence of take-up or impact.

The panel also considered the 'teaching on my course' indicator evidence, and found that there was significant variation in the subject split indicators and that there wasn't an improving picture in the year splits, and therefore found that the indicator only provided limited evidence of student engagement in learning and stretch.

The panel considered that in the round, the evidence was insufficient to demonstrate that this is a very high quality feature.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

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

The provider evidence includes:

- a strategy for research, knowledge transfer and scholarly activity, although there is no evidence of how research is embedded within the curriculum or used to support students' academic experience
- reference to courses which are accredited by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, with one example provided.

The panel considered that there is limited evidence relating to this feature, and no evidence of the impact of these approaches or how they relate to the provider's mix of students and courses.

Staff professional development and academic practice

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

The provider evidence includes:

- 75 per cent of lecturers hold Advance HE fellowship or a PGCE qualification

- working towards these is built into the research policy and the annual appraisal process.

The panel considered that there is no evidence of very high quality support for staff professional development beyond gaining teaching qualifications, and no evidence of how excellent academic practice is promoted.

Learning environment and academic support

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

The indicators provide evidence that:

- ‘academic support’ is below the level of very high quality, though with some uncertainty in the data, and some variation across subjects
- the provider’s provision for most other student groups is below benchmark.

The panel placed less weight on the part-time ‘academic support’ indicator because it covered much fewer students than the full-time indicator.

The provider evidence includes:

- embedding of academic skills into course content in the school of social sciences. There were some supportive student comments relating to this approach, although it was not clear to the panel how representative they were
- a new lectureship in learning technologies, although there is limited evidence of the impact of this post
- a specialist post to support higher education students who declare a disability, noting that approximately 25 per cent of students have done so.

The panel considered that there was insufficient evidence of the effectiveness of the support provided or of how the provider ensures that all students can benefit from very high quality academic support.

Learning resources

The panel considered that there is insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature and that the feature is clearly below the level of very high quality.

The indicators provide evidence that:

- ‘learning resources’ is far below the level of very high quality for full-time students, and has been declining from 2019 – 2022.

The panel placed less weight on the part-time ‘learning resources’ indicator because it covered much fewer students than the full-time indicator.

The provider evidence includes:

- there was a change in access to learning resources in 2018-19 when there was a change of validating partner
- the provider experienced a cyber attack in 2021 which affected course delivery and the student experience for six weeks
- specialist learning spaces and equipment, such as for dance and for art and craft, although there is no evidence of how these are used by students
- consolidation of higher education provision into single-use buildings, rather than dual use with further education. An example is provided relating to the move of construction and engineering
- recent investment in IT, although there is limited evidence of the impact of this as yet.

Noting that the indicator gives evidence of performance far below the level of very high quality, the panel considered evidence within the submission to identify examples of effective use of resources to support learning and teaching. Whilst the panel did note some positive interventions for the future, the panel concluded that this feature was clearly below the level of very high quality because there was no evidence of impact and strategic consideration of learning resources provision for all students.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel considered that there is insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature and that the feature is clearly below the level of very high quality.

The indicators provide evidence that:

- 'student voice' is not very high quality for full-time students, and has been declining from 2019 – 2022.

The panel placed less weight on the part-time 'student voice' indicator because it covered much fewer students than the full-time indicator.

The provider evidence includes:

- a new student experience officer role, which has responsibility for meeting student representatives, although there is no evidence of impact
- a standard item for student representatives at the teaching and learning committee
- an academic services newsletter has been introduced.

However, the panel found no evidence in the provider submission of a concerted policy around student representation, the development and embedding of module feedback mechanisms, or of a developed strategy for student engagement in co-design or feeding into course development.

Whilst the panel noted some positive interventions, overall the panel considered that this feature was clearly below the level of very high quality because there was no evidence of the impact of student engagement approaches or of an overarching strategy for student engagement.

Student outcomes: Requires improvement

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 very high quality feature
- insufficient evidence of very high quality for four features
- one feature where there is insufficient evidence to reach a judgement on quality.

The panel applied the criteria, and determined the outcome to be that the provider requires improvement for the award of a TEF rating. This is because there are no or 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 considered that there is insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

The provider evidence includes:

- an online virtual careers platform, which includes interactive training packages to support the development of employability skills, although there is no evidence of uptake or impact
- reference to strong regional employer links and access to job opportunities via online careers platform, although there is no evidence of the impact of these approaches
- quotes from students and employers, but the panel did not place significant weight on these as there was no evidence of how representative they are
- data relating to 'good degree' outcomes, but it was not clear how this was relevant to the provider's approach to supporting students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- accreditation of the BA (Hons) Counselling degree and provision of some training and placement opportunities as evidence to support progression for some students.

The panel considered that in the round, there was insufficient evidence of effective practices to support the provider's mix of students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

Continuation and completion rates

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

The indicators provide evidence that:

- 'continuation' and 'completion' are below the level of very high quality for full-time students
- 'continuation' is below the level of very high quality for part-time students
- 'completion' is below the level of very high quality, though with some uncertainty in the data, for part-time students.

The provider evidence includes:

- more rigorous selection processes have been introduced for some courses, although this has reduced student numbers with an impact on the student experience
- some of the completion indicator data covers courses which have been stopped
- a 24/7 telephone helpline providing access to qualified counsellors
- internal data showing reasons for student withdrawals.

The panel noted that there have therefore been actions to address poor continuation and completion rates by the closing or withdrawal of routes on courses, but did not find sufficient evidence of other ongoing actions to support students to continue and complete their studies on the remaining courses.

The panel considered that there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that this is a very high quality feature.

Progression rates

The panel considered that this is a very high quality feature.

The indicators provide evidence that:

- progression is very high quality for full-time students, with broad consistency different student groups
- there is limited evidence of very high quality progression for part-time students, though the panel placed more weight on the full-time indicator because of low numbers and uncertainty in the data.

The panel considered that there are very high rates of progression for the provider's students and courses, particularly considering the provider's context.

Intended educational gains

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

The provider evidence includes:

- summaries of different approaches to 'learning gain'
- a limited numerical analysis of academic gain.

Overall, the panel considered that the provider has not clearly articulated the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

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

The panel looked for evidence that the provider was supporting its students more generally to succeed, noting that there has been some potential enrichment activity discussed under 'student experience', and also considered other evidence across the student outcomes section.

There is very little additional mention in the provider submission as to what its approaches are to supporting educational gains, and therefore the panel concluded that the evidence does not indicate this is a very high quality feature.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered that there is insufficient evidence to reach a judgement on the quality of this feature.

The provider evidence includes:

- analysis of the achievement of two student cohorts in modules which 'promote academic practice' over three years. There is a relatively small sample size and the provider submission states that a broader focus on personal development and work readiness would need to be incorporated into assessed learning outcomes for a fuller quantification.

The panel treated this feature as neutral when considering the aspect rating as the guidance states that a provider will not be prevented from being awarded higher TEF ratings solely based on an absence of developed educational gain measures.

Overall: Requires improvement

The panel judged that the provider requires improvement for the award of a TEF rating for the student experience aspect and for the student outcomes aspect. The panel judged that overall, the provider requires improvement for the award of a TEF rating.