



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

## **Summary TEF 2023 panel statement**

**University of Lincoln**

# Summary of outcomes

## Overall: Gold

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

### Student experience: Gold

The student academic experience is typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- course content and delivery that inspires students to actively engage in and commit to their learning, and stretches them to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential
- a supportive learning environment in which students have access to a wide and readily available range of outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs
- outstanding physical and virtual learning resources to support teaching and learning
- embedded engagement with students, leading to continuous improvements to the experiences and outcomes of students.

There are also some very high quality features:

- teaching, assessment and feedback practices that effectively support students' learning, progression, and attainment
- the use of research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for students
- support for staff professional development, and the promotion of excellent academic practice.

### Student outcomes: Gold

Student outcomes are typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

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

There are also some very high quality features:

- very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses
- the provider evaluates the educational gains made by its students.

# 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 Lincoln is a medium-sized university with around 18,000 students in 2020-21 on its three campuses.

The provider says it plays 'an important civic role in meeting the challenges in its region'. The provider submission notes that Greater Lincolnshire's economy is growing at a slower rate than that of the East Midlands and the UK, with high levels of deprivation in many places. Key barriers include low innovation activity, with businesses spending less on research and development per full-time employee than the UK average. The region also contains fewer innovation jobs than seen nationally, with a persistently low skilled population.

Within this context, the University of Lincoln aims to provide 'diverse pathways for many in the region to access higher education and develop new skills including apprenticeship programmes, foundation and Certificate of Higher Education entry routes'. It has an excellent record of widening participation with many students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Having a positive impact on local employability is a core element of the provider's 'civic and community focus'. Over 76 per cent of its graduates come from the East Midlands, the East of England or Yorkshire and the Humber, with 70.5 per cent staying to work in these regions, directly contributing to the local economy.

The assessment considered information about the provider's undergraduate courses and students on those courses. This includes apprenticeships at undergraduate level.

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/](https://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/](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/the-register/the-ofs-register/).

## **Student experience: Gold**

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

The panel found that the student experience is typically outstanding for the provider's mix of students and courses. Across the student experience aspect, the panel found:

- four outstanding quality features
- two very high quality features with elements of outstanding quality
- one further very high quality feature.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and found the best fit rating to be 'Gold'. This is because most features are of outstanding quality, or have elements of outstanding quality, and there is sufficient evidence to consider that provision is typically outstanding across the aspect.

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

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

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

The indicators provided initial evidence of very high quality 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' for full-time students, and this was mostly consistent across student groups and subjects. There was evidence of at least very high quality 'assessment and feedback' for part-time students, and at least very high quality 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' for apprenticeship students.

The evidence in the provider submission included:

- a teaching, learning and student experience strategy, with the aim of engaging students as partners in their educational journey. This strategy is an extension of the well-established and sector-leading Students as Producers (SaP) principles developed by the provider which ensure students co-create and produce knowledge in engaging curriculums. Evidence of the reach of SaP is provided (88% of external examiners confirmed SaP opportunities were embedded in courses)
- an assessment framework, co-created with students, that outlines specific requirements for assessment design, marking and feedback practice
- a series of workshops introducing a collaborative approach to assessment design and the development of skills in relation to employment and careers
- continuous improvement through course monitoring and review processes
- an acknowledgement of disparities within the indicators for Architecture students, and details on how the provider is tackling this with additional roles to help students build

confidence. The panel considered the provider's proactive recognition and resolution of identified issues to be particularly notable.

The student submission commends the 'different exam styles' and accessibility of tutor feedback. Survey data presented in the student submission provides further evidence that most students are satisfied with teaching. While the rating for online teaching during coronavirus pandemic is lower, the submission recognises the context as a mitigating factor. The submission also reports that most students were satisfied with assessment and feedback.

Overall, the panel considered the evidence to demonstrate that very high quality teaching, assessment and feedback practices at the provider are effective in supporting students' learning, progression, and attainment. The panel therefore concluded that this is a very high quality feature.

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

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission sets out how its underpinning curriculum design principles – SaP – enable students to actively engage in and commit to their learning, and stretch students to develop knowledge and skills. The submission also indicates how the provider uses external examiner feedback to test the delivery of its teaching, learning and student experience strategy, and that at least 98 per cent of external examiners confirmed that student achievement is above threshold, as evidence of stretch and challenge.

The panel noted that learning pivoted online during the coronavirus pandemic but as restrictions relaxed, a high proportion of teaching was delivered in person, with good practice maintained.

Compelling examples at subject level demonstrate how students actively engage with their learning through innovative methods, including:

- placement learning for all geography students
- student learning through Law and Sports Therapy clinics
- a review of assessment in Nursing and Midwifery
- a live assessment centre for Business students
- Graphic Design students enhancing wards of Lincolnshire Hospitals
- the College of Arts employing live projects working with local and national businesses in the creative industries.

The panel considered that these provisions go above and beyond what is expected.

The student submission does note that some students believe the teaching could be 'more interactive in places' but commends the volunteering opportunities provided alongside academic studies.

Overall, while also considering relevant evidence noted under the 'Teaching, assessment, and feedback' feature, the panel considered there was sufficient evidence to suggest that the provider's

course content and delivery inspire the provider's students to actively engage in and commit to their learning, and stretch students to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential. The panel therefore concluded that this is an outstanding quality feature.

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

The panel considered this to be a very high quality feature with elements of outstanding quality.

The evidence in the provider submission included:

- 61 per cent of students that are on courses with Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditations
- the College of Science receiving feedback from PSRBs that professional practice modules prepare students for the workplace through engaging with industry informed problems
- examples throughout the submission of employer engagement and professional practice engagement which enriches learning experiences, including activities and events delivered as part of the careers readiness programme.

The provider submission also details an undergraduate research opportunity scheme as an example of research-led teaching. The scheme allows students to identify further research areas and projects to accompany their studies, backed by bursaries.

Overall, 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. The panel considered the evidence to demonstrate a very high quality feature with some outstanding elements.

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

The panel found this to be a very high quality feature with elements of outstanding quality.

The provider submission describes its investment in staff development as fundamental to the excellence in teaching and assessment. It delivers a holistic approach, catering for all levels of experience and professional progression. It offers a comprehensive series of development workshops and its five-level model for academic practice development and recognition enables staff to access professional opportunities dependent on their level of experience, knowledge and practice at any point in their career with the provider.

Staff build on core induction activities through the Academic Professional Apprenticeship, a level seven programme for staff new to teaching and learning in higher education. They also offer an alternative PGCHE qualification for blended learning practice, designed to move seamlessly between physical and online pedagogic environments.

The panel considered the range of evidence, including CPD activities, annual showcases, and the recognition scheme, along with the proportion of staff holding teaching qualifications or Advance HE fellowships, to demonstrate a strong commitment to quality.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider offers some outstanding support for staff professional development and that excellent academic practice is promoted. However, the panel

did not find strong evidence that excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider. The panel therefore judged the feature as very high quality with some outstanding elements, rather than outstanding overall.

## **Learning environment and academic support**

The panel found this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The indicator provided initial evidence that 'academic support' is outstanding for full-time students. For part-time and apprenticeship students there was limited certainty in the data.

The provider submission described a coherent approach to personal tutoring which includes the allocation of a personal tutor to every student with training, and digital resources to support the process and personalises support plans. Models of the personal tutor system vary across departments to meet specific needs, for example Maths and Physics focus on delivering small group sessions whereas Education formulates goals through whole group, small group and one to one timetabled sessions.

There is support and training available for personal tutors and an app which offers peer-to-peer advice and guidance, developed by recent graduates and proven successful by qualitative evidence.

The student submission states that while students' experience of engaging with personal tutors was excellent, the availability of tutors is inconsistent for some students.

The provider also outlines the work of their student support services which aim to enhance the wellbeing of students, describing how wellbeing has a significant impact on students' academic experience and outcomes.

The student submission indicated that over the TEF assessment period, the provider has seen progressive developments in widening opportunities for students within and beyond the classroom. Overall, students describe being appreciative of the support received from academic and professional service staff, alongside the development of quality learning resources available. There are many additional opportunities to engage in the Lincoln community, both within the university and the students' union, promoting student wellbeing and student outcomes.

In summary, the panel considered that the submissions demonstrate that the provider ensures a supportive learning environment, and most of its students have access to a wide and readily available range of outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs. Taken together with the indicators and considering the evidence overall, the panel concluded that this is an outstanding quality feature.

## **Learning resources**

The panel considered this an outstanding quality feature.

The indicator provided compelling initial evidence of outstanding 'learning resources' for full-time students and at least very high quality 'learning resources' for part-time and apprenticeship students. The panel considered this represents an outstanding provision that is constantly expanded and updated to remain relevant for the needs of their student population.



In its submission, the provider outlines the development of digital capabilities and 80 per cent of schools developing digital enhancement plans to ensure engagement with online resources, supported by workshops and learning activities. There is evidence of growing digital capacity, increased use of digital tools and engagement with online resources.

The student submission notes that major improvements have been made to learning resources, particularly digital ones. There is a strong appreciation of the work delivered by library staff during the coronavirus pandemic, with a dramatically increased use of digital resources.

The provider opened a state-of-the-art medical school in 2019, in partnership with the University of Nottingham moving to become a standalone school. The panel noted that there are excellent facilities for health and social care programmes, with a multi-professional clinic. Facilities are at hand to provide real-world learning experiences.

Considering the evidence overall, the panel concluded that there are outstanding physical and virtual learning resources to support teaching and learning, and that this is an outstanding quality feature.

### **Student engagement in improvement**

The panel considered this an outstanding quality feature.

The indicator provided initial evidence of at least very high quality 'student voice' for full-time students, outstanding quality for apprenticeship students, and performance below the level of very high quality for part-time students.

The provider submission demonstrates how student voice is facilitated through a coherent approach that includes:

- course representatives, who are appointed through interview process rather than elections
- subject committees that are co-chaired by students
- teaching and learning support panels which address thematic areas of development
- colleges and subject areas that engage with students to continuously improve their learning experience
- mid-module evaluations that are used to amplify the student voice and provide further opportunities for staff to enhance their teaching.

The student submission is positive about the benefits of the teaching and learning support panels but identifies declining rates of student participation. Students are also engaged in staff recruitment processes, validations, and periodic reviews. Students are supported through training and development to participate in these structures.

The student submission also provides evidence of the provider responding positively to student feedback including the provision of more e-books. The student submission provides evidence that most students know how they can make their voice heard and 84 per cent of students reported seeing changes as a result.

Significant campaigns have been achieved, through the women's safety committee that has highlighted issues such as campus lighting and drink spiking. Annual school action days allow students time to engage with their staff to design curriculums and skills. The panel noted this as a particularly progressive approach.

Overall, the panel concluded there was sufficient evidence that the provider embeds engagement with its students, leading to continuous improvement to the experiences and outcomes of its students. The panel therefore judged this to be an outstanding quality feature.

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

- four outstanding quality features
- one very high quality feature with elements of outstanding quality
- one further very high quality feature.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and found the best fit rating to be 'Gold'. This is because most features are of outstanding quality and there is sufficient evidence to consider that provision is typically outstanding across the aspect.

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.

The provider submission demonstrates an understanding of its students and describes approaches that are tailored towards student outcomes. This is reflected through the provider's outstanding continuation and completion indicators.

The evidence in the submission of support for students to succeed through and beyond their studies included:

- central to support is the creation of a personalised academic study support plan on enrolment, led by the wellbeing team. These are shared confidentially with relevant academic and professional service teams to ensure bespoke support is provided. The diverse student demographic requires a range of interventions to support success and the provider works proactively to deliver consistently outstanding continuation and completion rates across most subjects and student groups.

- core to supporting student success are centralised dashboards, which are accessible to personal tutors and other relevant academic and support teams. Each student has an individual record logging their attendance, assessment results, library visits and virtual learning environment logins. Where there is cause for concern, the provider looks holistically at academic, emotional, social, and cultural issues or practical and personal issues to identify appropriate support, through a discussion with the student.
- positive evaluation of this approach alongside recognition of additional support needs post-coronavirus has led to the establishment of a team of Student Success and Engagement Officers who work alongside the expert team of Student Support and Advice Workers, providing an additional layer of proactive interventions. These significantly enhance the support provided by academic teams, ensuring this support comes earlier and is better tailored to individual needs.
- the graduate skills builder and career readiness programme to support students to develop their employability.
- the Lincoln Award, designed to support students to develop their employability through engagement in activities including work placements and volunteering.
- the career readiness programme, which is embedded into all taught curricula supported by personal tutors. It is backed by research and allows students to evaluate their preparedness for employment after courses.

The panel noted that there is ample recognition of underrepresented groups within specific initiatives, such as the Creative Advertising course which has been described as ‘mirroring the industry work process’ by a student. In addition, many courses focus on real-life workplace experiences, particularly within Social sciences and the Business school. There are strong provisions for mental health and wellbeing to ensure students can continue throughout their studies, backed by qualitative evidence by students.

Overall, the panel considered that the provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies. The panel therefore concluded that this is an outstanding quality feature.

## **Continuation and completion rates**

The panel considered this an outstanding quality feature.

The indicators provided evidence that ‘continuation’ is at least very high quality and ‘completion’ is outstanding for full-time students. This was broadly consistent across the student and subject mix. For part-time students, there was evidence that ‘continuation’ is outstanding and ‘completion’ is at least very high quality. There was limited evidence that ‘continuation’ was very high quality for apprenticeship students.

The panel considered that outstanding rates of continuation and completion are achieved through a combination of factors, including the quality of teaching, the support provided to students, and the range of professional opportunities offered.

Overall, the panel concluded that there are outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses, and that this is an outstanding quality feature.

### **Progression rates**

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

The indicator provided evidence of very high quality 'progression' for full-time students and outstanding 'progression' for part-time students.

Overall, 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.

The provider submission presents a detailed account of the development of its approach to educational gains over the last decade.

The regional and demographic context of the provider and its student body has influenced some of the broad educational gains that they intend their students to achieve, adding value and opportunity during and beyond their studies. Key educational gains include academic knowledge and skills, personal skills, and work readiness skills and experiences, which are tailored at school and programme level to suit different students' needs. The personal tutor framework underpins students' academic and personal gains, and the career readiness programme underpins students' work readiness gains. A wide range of examples are presented to demonstrate the tailoring and reach of the approach.

Overall, the panel considered 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. These go well beyond what is measured by the student outcomes indicators. The panel concluded that this is an outstanding quality feature.

### **Approaches to supporting educational gains**

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The panel found that key educational gains include academic knowledge and skills, personal skills, and work readiness skills, which are tailored at school and programme level to suit different students' needs.

The provider submission provided evidence of actions taken to secure educational gains, including:

- the personal tutoring scheme which is identified by the provider as a key mechanism to deliver educational gains to students
- actions and interventions at school level which aim to deliver educational gains, tailored to different contexts
- a career readiness programme which underpins students' work readiness gains.

The provider submission also showed how subjects such as Science, Nursing and Business tailor support to students with alternative entry routes, and the panel considered this to be evidence of outstanding provision. Additionally, the provider understands the local context of its students' aspirations and tailors provisions appropriately, including the employability strategy and careers readiness programme.

Overall the panel considered that the provider's approaches to supporting its students to achieve educational gains are evidence-based and tailored to its students and their different starting points. The panel concluded that this is an outstanding quality feature.

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

The panel considered this a very high quality feature, with some elements of outstanding quality.

The provider submission identifies a range of ways in which it tracks and measures educational gains, including analysis of module marks at different levels and the use of surveys to evaluate student engagement, life skills and career readiness. The surveys all show a growth in these areas over the student journey.

The panel considered there was a clear commitment to developing the evaluation approach further, including approaches to student self-evaluation.

Overall, the panel concluded there was sufficient evidence that the provider evaluates the gains made by its students, has demonstrated that its students are succeeding in achieving some of these educational gains and has clear plans for the further development of its approaches. The panel considered that this demonstrates a very high quality feature with some outstanding elements.

### **Overall: Gold**

Applying the guidance and the panel members' expert judgment, the panel considered the overall 'best fit' rating to be 'Gold'.

The panel considered the student experience aspect rating to be 'Gold' and the student outcomes aspect rating to be 'Gold'. In line with the guidance, the overall rating is therefore 'Gold', because this is the rating awarded to both of the aspects.