



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

The London School of Economics and Political Science

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at the London School of Economics and Political Science and the outcomes it leads to are very high quality.

Student experience: Silver

The student academic experience is typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting the learning, progression and attainment of its mix of students
- course content and delivery effectively encourage the provider's students to engage in their learning and stretch students to develop their knowledge and skills
- the provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience
- excellent academic practice is promoted and very high quality support for staff professional development is in place
- the provider fosters a supportive learning environment and its students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support
- physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning.

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
- rates of successful continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses
- rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses
- the provider clearly articulates the range of educational gains it intends its students to achieve
- the provider's approach to supporting its students to achieve educational gains is evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to its students and their different starting points
- the provider evaluates the gains made by its students, and demonstrates its students are succeeding in achieving the intended gains.

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 London School of Economics and Political Science is a research-intensive interdisciplinary social sciences university. It describes itself as an institution 'with a global outlook which has a positive impact on the world through critical understanding of political, social and economic processes'.

The provider's vision is to provide 'a community of people and ideas, founded to know the causes of things, for the betterment of society'.

Over the TEF period the provider has prioritised improvement in the student experience supported by a very significant transformation of learning, teaching and assessment, and campus development underpinned by £7.7 million investment in its 'educate for global impact change plan'.

The provider has had a student population of around 12,000 in each of the four years of the TEF period, and around 5,000 of these in each year were undergraduates. There were no part-time undergraduates during the TEF period and small numbers of mature students (around 150 each year) aged 21-30. It has a diverse international student community.

The provider is a high-tariff institution with nearly 50 per cent of students entering with A-levels at AAA or higher, but also 20 per cent of students entering from access, foundation or other Level 3 courses.

There is a select range of social science and related science subjects studied: economics, business and management, computing, mathematics, law, sociology and history, philosophy, geography and psychology. Economics is the largest subject area.

The assessment considered information about the provider's undergraduate courses and students on those courses.

Full details about the provider's student demographics used in the TEF 2023 assessment are available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/data-used-in-tef-2023/

More information about this provider can be found on the OfS Register at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/the-register/the-ofs-register/.

Student experience: Silver

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

In accordance with the guidance, the panel determined the student experience aspect rating to be 'Silver'.

The panel considered most features to be very high quality for most groups of students, but found insufficient evidence of very high quality for one feature.

The panel found throughout its assessment:

- that the provider typically embeds very high quality approaches for its mix of students and courses
- compelling evidence that the very high quality features applied to most of the provider's groups of students
- the indicators varied for some groups of students and courses

The panel considered that the aspect is typically very high quality, and therefore a 'best fit' to the rating of 'Silver'. This is because it found that most features are very high quality for most groups of students and courses, and the panel's judgement therefore best fits the description: 'most features of the aspect are very high quality for all groups of students'.

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

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

The panel considered both features to be very high quality.

The panel noted that the full-time overall 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' indicators provide initial evidence of very high quality.

The provider submission describes how it has made a concerted effort to improve the student experience over the TEF period, to support the diversity of its student body and help students to succeed.

It describes an embedded approach to teaching, feedback, and assessment through a consistent focus on its core capabilities: provision of student-centred disciplinary programmes within a rich interdisciplinary social science context.

The student submission describes a range of assessment administration issues and suggests that the provider has been slow to address these. The panel gave some weight to this but noted that there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that these issues were representative of the experience of all student groups.

Further evidence in the provider submission includes:

- diversification of assessment to create more intellectual stretch and connect to real world learning, moving away from essays and exams towards 'varied and tailored' assessments
- the BSc in psychological and behavioural science has achieved 93.2 per cent for 'teaching on my course' from the first cohort of 28 students. While this example relates to one small cohort, the panel gave weight to the new approach and the evidence of impact
- many programmes have 'research throughlines' designed into their curriculum. The BSc economics is detailed as an example – the panel gave weight to this as the largest subject area at the provider
- just under half of students study joint degree programmes and around 75 per cent of students take modules outside their home department in all three years of study
- from data presented by the provider, 95 per cent of students agree that feedback is timely
- the provider states that 99-100 per cent of external examiner reports rate student learning as excellent or high standard.

The student submission states that students have spearheaded effort towards an inclusive, decolonised curriculum, especially through the Change Makers initiative which has facilitated 91 research projects across 13 themes during the TEF period.

Overall, the panel considered that there is sufficient evidence that the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting the learning, progression and attainment of its mix of students and courses. The panel also concluded that course content and delivery effectively encourage students to engage in their learning and stretch students to develop their knowledge and skills.

The panel did not find strong evidence that excellent highly effective and tailored practice in teaching and learning and stretch were yet embedded across the provider, nor that students were stretched to their fullest potential, and so did not consider these features to be outstanding.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

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

The panel noted that it is core to the mission of this provider to offer a curriculum that draws on the research of academic staff who are world-leading scholars. Students are guided through an interdisciplinary research journey and all students have opportunities to engage in research.

The provider describes its focus upon experiential learning and the opportunities that students have to apply their knowledge and skills, such as:

- more than 120 opportunities per year for students to be employed as paid research assistants by academic staff
- student articles published through the university press
- a volunteering centre which, by the end of their third year, saw over half of undergraduate students engaged in volunteering.

Overall, the panel considered that the provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement to contribute to a very high-quality academic experience. It did not find compelling evidence of the impact or reach across all of the provider's groups of students and courses, so this was not judged to be outstanding.

Staff professional development and academic practice

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

Evidence in the provider submission of very high quality academic practice and support for staff development includes:

- the introduction of a teaching-focused career pathway in 2016. There are now teaching specialist appointments in 13 of 18 undergraduate departments
- an extensive programme of educational development events, which link to the 'educate for global impact' priorities
- communities of practice are in place for educational leaders, including regular forums focused on specific leadership roles and subject-area focus
- the establishment of a team to support effective monitoring and evaluation
- the launch of an evaluation strategy and framework in 2021.

Overall, the panel concluded there to be excellent academic practice promoted and that very high quality support for staff professional development is in place, but considered there to be insufficient evidence to demonstrate that this is currently embedded across the provider.

Learning environment and academic support

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

The panel noted that the 'academic support' indicator provides evidence of very high quality for full-time students, and that this is improving. However for some groups, this is below very high quality, which the panel recognises is being addressed for groups of underrepresented students through an inclusive education action plan, but it has yet to see the evidence of the impact of this work.

Further evidence in the provider submission includes:

- an integrated approach to supporting student academic, professional and personal development through the LSE LIFE hub. The provider states that students who engage at least once with LSE LIFE achieve better year average marks than those who don't, although data is not provided for this
- that each student has a dedicated academic mentor in their home department, and in 2021-22, the student mentoring programme connected 189 mentors to 600 students across 14 undergraduate departments
- the digital skills lab, which reaches nearly a third of undergraduate students through self-paced online learning
- there are peer study groups, and students have access to academic skills and referencing workshops, and language support

- a student support map (from 2020-21) helps students to find support through the different routes available, though the student submission suggests that students still struggle as there are multiple routes to navigate.

Overall, the panel considered that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the provider fosters a supportive learning environment and its students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support. The panel found limited evidence of impact across all the provider's mix of students, including students from underrepresented groups, so this feature was not found to be outstanding.

Learning resources

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

The panel considered that the indicator for 'learning resources' provides initial evidence of very high quality for full-time students, although when looking at the evidence for specific student groups, found some that were below the level very high quality.

Student satisfaction has increased significantly since 2019. The 2022 National Student Survey shows high levels of satisfaction with IT (80 per cent), the library (82 per cent), and course specific resources (89 per cent).

The panel gave weight to the evidence in the provider submission of substantial investment in buildings and infrastructure upgrades, including a ten-year plan to improve teaching and learning facilities that began in 2018.

Further evidence in the provider submission includes:

- upgraded facilities equipped with technologies and furniture to support collaborative and active learning
- hybrid classroom technologies are being installed in 135 teaching rooms
- efforts to improve the accessibility of virtual learning resources
- a student department common room or space for students.

Overall, the panel considered that physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning. The panel did not find sufficient evidence to assess this feature as outstanding because several of the initiatives are recent, and it did not find compelling evidence that physical and virtual learning resources are tailored.

Student engagement in improvement

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

The panel noted that the 'student engagement in improvement' indicator provides initial evidence of being below the level of very high quality. While the data has improved over the four year TEF period, the provider acknowledges this as an area for improvement and describes its strategy to 'reposition students at the centre of our community'.

The provider and student submissions describe initiatives to improve student engagement. The evidence includes:

- the appointment of new roles to support student engagement and experience, and the establishment of a student engagement and experience network with over 150 members
- plans to roll-out a feedback platform in 2022-23
- establishment of a student voice and feedback working group in partnership with the student union, which has developed guidance and standards
- LSE Change Makers funding for student projects, with 91 projects completed since 2018
- a student education panel which provides a regular forum for students to influence change.

The panel gave weight to the description in the student submission of barriers to student engagement. However, the panel also noted that the student submission is complimentary about the provider's efforts to increase student engagement in improvement.

The panel gave weight to the provider's critical reflection and the changes in the indicators over the TEF period. It noted the range of evidence in the student submission. However, it felt that while the provider demonstrates a commitment to improvement, its actions are not yet having an impact, especially for some groups of underrepresented students. For these reasons, it did not find there to be sufficient evidence of very high quality for this 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.

In accordance with the guidance, the panel weighed up all the evidence relating to the student outcomes aspect as a whole and determined the rating to be 'Gold'.

Overall, the panel considered all the features for student outcomes at this provider to be of outstanding quality, including for students from underrepresented groups.

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 submission describes a range of initiatives through which it supports its students, while it notes that the coronavirus pandemic is a limiting factor when measuring impact. The panel considered these to demonstrate a strong commitment to inclusion and evaluation, particularly for students with declared disabilities and black students, where outcomes are outstanding.

Evidence in the provider submission includes:

- the LSE welcome orientation programme – internal data shows that 73 per cent of students find that this increases their study confidence

- an inclusive educational change programme and a student mental health wellbeing framework enable students to progress and succeed, including those students that are shown to be doing less well – this is particularly true for the inclusive education action plan
- analysis of module level data for the 2020 cohort which shows awarding gaps based on ethnicity and disability narrowing and, in some cases, closing
- investment in student wellbeing services, including 24/7 phone support, all-staff introductory training, over 250 mental health first aiders and 30 trained student peer supporters.

The panel considered the evidence in the provider submission sufficient to suggest that this feature is outstanding and concluded that, overall, the provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel considered this feature to be outstanding.

The panel noted that the ‘continuation’ and ‘completion’ indicators provide initial evidence of outstanding quality, but acknowledged that this varies for some underrepresented groups, and that the provider has measures in place to address this.

For example, the provider reports actions taken to address the slightly lower continuation of students with declared disabilities through targeted support, and the move to enabling in-year resits. The indicator for continuation for black students gives evidence of poorer provider performance but this is being addressed, for example, through the provider’s focus on inclusive teaching and learning methods.

The panel gave weight to the evidence that the provider has a clear understanding of the continuation and completion rates of its mix of students and that it tailors its approaches to their needs. Overall, it considered that there are outstanding rates of successful continuation and completion for the provider’s students and courses.

Progression rates

The panel considered this feature to be outstanding.

The progression indicator for this provider gives compelling initial evidence of an outstanding feature for all students and groups.

The panel gave weight to the evidence in the provider submission of external recognition of outstanding progression achievement through rankings and awards.

Further evidence in the provider and student submissions includes:

- the career development cycle (understand, explore, experience, implement) used by LSE careers to tailor student support
- an LSE careers work-based learning programme which has partnered with 6,643 organisations since 2018 and provided 1,116 opportunities for students in 2021-22
- ‘LSE generate’, an entrepreneurship incubator that supports 3,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students per year

- targeted support for disabled, black, Asian and minority ethnic students, social mobility, LGBTQ+ and women students, for example through dedicated careers consultants
- the student submission notes that 'LSE is among the best universities for student participation in clubs or societies with about 55 per cent of all students involved.'

Having weighed up all the evidence the panel concluded that there are outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

Intended educational gains

The panel considered this feature to be outstanding.

The provider submission describes engaging with research literature and the Higher Education Funding Council for England work on learning gains to support the development of its educational gains framework.

It expresses educational gains through four dimensions that go beyond what is measured by the student outcomes indicators and extend beyond the academic curriculum.

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. It does this in the context of its mission as a specialist social sciences institution that provides its students with 'vital spaces to practice, develop and master these gains in authentic and applied contexts'. The panel therefore concludes this is an outstanding feature.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

The panel considered this feature to be outstanding.

The provider describes a process of consultation with students, alumni, staff and employers to design its approach to educational gains, alongside a commitment to partnering with students to develop its framework further.

The provider has developed resources to support departments adopting practice that enables the educational gains.

The provider submission includes data that shows 76 per cent of students experienced 'at least one assessment per year designed to develop critical thinking' in 2021-22. Guidance is given in curriculum design which supports the development of the specific dimensions of educational gains.

Overall, the panel considered that the provider's approach to supporting its students to achieve educational gains is evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to its students and their different starting points.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered this feature to be outstanding.

The provider submission demonstrates that its strategy for evaluating educational gains goes beyond the use of degree and graduate outcomes measures, and that the education evaluation framework is embedded across all change programmes.

The panel noted that the provider makes sure that all students can achieve educational gains, for example through LSE100, an interdisciplinary module that is taken by all first year students.

It also noted that there is a coherent strategy being developed to evaluate educational gains.

Having weighed up the evidence, the panel concluded that the provider clearly articulates the range of educational gains it intends its students to achieve and that the provider's approaches to supporting students to achieve these gains are evidence-based and tailored.

Overall: Silver

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

The panel considered the student experience aspect rating to be 'Silver' and the student outcomes aspect rating to be 'Gold'. The panel weighed up all the evidence across all features and across all the provider's student groups, subjects and courses to come to a 'best fit' decision.

The provider usually acknowledges that there is evidence of different experiences and outcomes for some groups, and it describes actions in the submission to address these areas. However, there is insufficient evidence in the provider submission about the student experience to give the panel confidence that these actions are having impact on all groups of underrepresented students at this point, and upon all subject areas (such as mathematical sciences).

The panel found the 'best fit' assessment to be that most student experience features are of very high quality for most groups of students and courses and all student outcomes features are of outstanding quality for all of the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups.

When determining whether the overall rating should be 'Gold' or 'Silver', the panel considered there to be typically a combination of very high quality and outstanding quality provision for all groups of students and courses. In judging 'Silver' to be a better fit than 'Gold' the panel found that many student experience initiatives were recent and had limited evidence of impact, and this contributed to the overall judgement.