



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

NCG

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at NCG 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:

- teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting students' learning, progression, and attainment
- course content and delivery effectively encourages students to engage in their learning, and stretches them to develop their knowledge and skills
- the use of research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for students.

There are also some outstanding quality features:

- outstanding support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider
- 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
- embedded engagement with students, leading to continuous improvements to the experiences and outcomes of students.

Student outcomes: Silver

Student outcomes are typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- effective support for students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

There is also an outstanding quality feature:

- the provider's articulation of the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to its students and their future ambitions.

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

NCG has a multi-campus higher education offering at four of its further education colleges: Newcastle College University Centre, Carlisle College, Kidderminster College and Southwark College. Within this offering there are specialist satellite sites that deliver higher technical education: Newcastle Aviation Academy, the Rail Academy and the Energy Academy. It has one collaborative partner, the Organisational Learning Centre, which delivers Level 6 top-up programmes in Bolton, Manchester, Oldham and London.

NCG states its mission is to 'deliver exceptional education to create transformative opportunities for individuals that strengthen the prosperity of their local communities', which is supported by its vision of 'being the UK's leading provider of higher technical education through our inclusive approach, local impact, national influence and reach'. The provider has awarded NCG foundation degrees since 2011 and NCG honours and master's degrees since 2016, being the first further education institution in the UK to be granted degree awarding powers.

It has had around 2,300 full-time undergraduates per year. Part-time undergraduate numbers fell over the four-year TEF period from 870 to 460. The predominant offer is two-year courses, with the largest numbers of students studying allied health (10 per cent), business and management (15 per cent), creative arts and design (14.2 per cent), engineering (13.5 per cent) and performing arts (13.9 per cent). Over the TEF period, the number of students on one-year courses has increased.

NCG has a focus on widening participation. Around 60 per cent of its students are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation measure). A similar proportion have qualifications on entry such as BTECs, higher education access awards, or they are mature students with few known qualifications. Mature students make up 50 per cent of students, while 21 per cent have declared a disability and 78 per cent of students balance employment and study.

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.

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

- three very high quality features
- three outstanding quality features
- one feature where there was insufficient evidence of very high quality.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and considered the best fit rating to be 'Silver'. This is because the evidence '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

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

The overall indicator for 'the teaching on my course' provided evidence of very high quality for full-time students, but not very high quality for the smaller number of part-time students.

The overall 'assessment and feedback' indicator provided evidence of outstanding quality for full-time students, and very high quality for part-time students albeit with limited certainty in the data.

The evidence in the provider and student submissions included:

- co-curricular teaching, learning and assessment such as digital arts and counselling, and students collaborating on projects. However the panel considered there was limited evidence of the impact of this activity
- the provider returned to in-person delivery as soon as possible after coronavirus restrictions, which they state was a reflection of the needs of their mature student mix
- the student submission referred to students preferring their smaller class sizes with staff that were well experienced and have industry knowledge, providing a unique experience
- detail of the higher education strategies that underpin teaching, learning and assessment.

Overall, the panel considered the evidence to demonstrate that the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that effectively support its students' learning, progression and attainment. The panel also considered that the practices are evidence-based and tailored to different subject mixes.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

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

In assessing this feature the panel took into account the indicators for 'the teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' as noted above. In addition, the evidence in the submissions included:

- employer-led curriculum design, which includes experiential learning and authentic assessment e.g. students working on live briefs with employers
- a 20-working day turn around for assessment feedback, supported by structured criteria – AIMS (Achievement, Improvement, Moving forward, and Spelling, punctuation and grammar). Feedback is available in audio and visual format to enable tailored approaches
- stakeholder advisory boards led to winning an award, praising module content as 'innovative and vocationally relevant', and the variety of industry partnerships to enhance learning
- industry takeover days are standard practice and mean that students can engage in real-life work as part of their assessment, for example students running a local hotel
- the provider's strong performance for 'learning opportunities' in the 2022 National Student Survey (NSS).

Overall, considering all of the evidence, the panel concluded that the provider's course content and delivery is effective in encouraging its students to engage in their learning, and stretches students to develop their knowledge and skills. The panel therefore concluded that this is a very high quality feature.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

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

The evidence in the submissions included:

- staff are 'dual professionals' and come from industry backgrounds with sector expertise to teach in the classroom
- termly industry advisory boards in each curriculum
- modules in work-related learning and work-based learning
- courses are developed with regional and national employers to provide experimental learning opportunities e.g. industry takeovers.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider demonstrates an understanding of the type of teacher and curriculum it needs for its students, and that this is a very high quality feature.

Staff professional development and academic practice

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider states that it expects teaching staff to 'engage in scholarship through their discipline and teaching practice', and this is underpinned by the relevant higher education strategy.

Evidence in the provider submission considered by the panel included:

- staff new to teaching have a mentor during their first year of teaching, and experience teaching observation and peer-to-peer observation
- one third of staff have higher education fellowships
- the creation of the College Higher Education Action Research Group (CHEARG) which brings together staff from across NCG to discuss best practice
- 'extensive' training was given on digital teaching methods to support students during the coronavirus pandemic
- the provider offers funding for higher-level masters/doctoral studies for staff
- a significant list of published research from 2017-present, which led to an external award
- a research portal is used by students and staff to share internal and external research and details how to engage with research.

Overall, considering all of the evidence and the provider's context, the panel concluded that the provider has shown a commitment to staff development and that there is sufficient evidence to judge this an outstanding quality feature. The panel noted in particular the support for staff to undertake research alongside teaching.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The overall indicator for 'academic support' provided some initial evidence of outstanding quality for full-time students, but with limited certainty in the data. The part-time indicator provided evidence of either very high quality or not very high quality, again with limited certainty. The panel noted some variation in the indicators across student groups and courses. It also noted improvement over the four-year time period for both part-time and full-time students.

The evidence in the provider and student submissions included:

- an internal survey showed a 95 per cent satisfaction with support
- the academic support team offers coaching for reflexive and reflective skill development
- a mental health and wellbeing digital project works to engage commuter students (so far it has reached 700 students)
- a project has led to collaborative spaces for students with young children/caring responsibilities. There are 47 students currently participating
- during the coronavirus pandemic the 'Making Connections' initiative was developed to encourage staff-student communication to ensure support is tailored

- the student submission confirms that students are seen as individuals and are fully supported by staff.

Overall, taking into account the evidence in the submissions and the indicators, the panel considered there was sufficient evidence of outstanding quality for this feature. It considered that support is tailored to students' needs and is embedded across the provider.

Learning resources

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

The overall indicator for 'learning resources' provided initial evidence of not very high quality for both full-time and part-time students. There was some variation across student groups and subjects, including evidence of outstanding quality for two full-time subject areas.

Evidence in the submissions included:

- alongside the NSS the provider uses an internal Higher Education Student Survey (HESS) which demonstrated that learning resource satisfaction rose from 80% in 2020 to 85% in 2022 (at a 70% response rate of 1607 students)
- £4 million of additional support during the coronavirus pandemic for digital learning – including laptop loans to 120 students
- a response was noted about Wi-Fi speed in the student submission, which the provider addressed sufficiently and positively
- investment in curriculum delivery to make sure that learning resources are relevant to subjects. Specific spend includes subsea remote operated vehicles, a 3D printer, VR and ground instructional aircraft. Access to these is supported in NSS comments
- 109 students responded to a survey, with 80 per cent saying resources are excellent or good, in response to new study pods and industry standard technology (detailed in the student submission). This follows OfS funding bids in 2022
- detail throughout the provider submission about a strategic approach to learning resources, which is discussed in a number of higher education related committees
- funding to establish two technical hubs in areas of regional importance: Digital Technology at Carlisle College and NCUC, and Construction, Engineering and Energy at Carlisle, Kidderminster and NCUC from 2024.

Overall, the panel considered there was not enough evidence in the provider submission of how resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning. The panel noted the alternative HESS data but did not consider that this sufficiently mitigated the TEF indicator performance, and considered there to be limited explanation of the indicator performance in the provider submission. Taking all of the evidence into account, the panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence of very high quality.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The overall indicator for 'student voice' provided compelling evidence of outstanding quality for full-time students. It also provided some evidence of outstanding quality for part-time students, but with limited certainty in the data.

The evidence in the submissions included:

- the provider won the Educate North 2020 award for its student fellowship programme
- programme representatives enable a connection between students and staff which feeds into the 'Together We Changed' initiative, where the feedback loop is addressed and closed
- students are supported to present at national conferences, with two different examples given from different courses
- a student voice campaign and group and curriculum forums, which give students direct access to making change
- two student-led publications with students involved in external undergraduate research events, and a student conference, which 630 students attended.

Overall, the panel considered that the provider has embedded engagement with students through a number of initiatives, which has led to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students. The panel concluded there was sufficient evidence of an outstanding quality 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.

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

- two very high quality features
- one outstanding quality feature
- two features where there was insufficient evidence of very high quality
- one feature where the panel did not reach a judgement.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and considered the best fit rating to be 'Silver'. This is because the evidence '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 outcomes features is set out below.

Approaches to supporting student success

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

The provider submission notes a strategic approach to providing technical and vocational courses, and effective support for its students to succeed in and beyond their studies. The evidence included:

- continuation rates have improved over the four-year time series
- completion of employer-led curriculum design, including experiential learning and authentic assessment
- examples of work-based projects across many different courses
- budgets for programme teams to fund initiatives such as training courses
- peer mentoring is offered at the provider
- a 'Mothers as Students' group was created to advise committees on how the institution could best support student parents, although the panel noted limited detail was provided on the impact of this.

The student submission refers to support provided by Careers and Employability, which provides valuable help in developing skills to help students gain employment.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in and beyond their studies, and that this is a very high quality feature.

Continuation and completion rates

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

The overall indicator for 'continuation' provided evidence of very high quality for both full-time and part-time students. The panel noted some variation across student groups and courses, with evidence of both not very high quality and outstanding quality.

The overall indicator for 'completion' provided evidence of not very high quality for full-time students, and evidence of very high quality for part-time students.

Considering the evidence overall, including evidence noted under the 'Approaches to supporting student success' feature above, the panel concluded there are very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses, with recognition from the provider of areas for improvement.

Progression rates

The panel considered there to be insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

The indicator for 'progression' provided evidence of not very high quality for full-time students, but there was evidence of outstanding quality for part-time students.

Additional evidence considered by the panel included:

- that the part-time delivery is aimed at people already in work
- the majority of provision is delivered as a foundation degree with top-up, with most of their students staying at the provider to complete
- 495 students graduated from courses with professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) accreditation over the last four years
- eight programmes provide the option to study for 1 year which leads to 'meaningful work'
- the provider shared examples of different work areas its students progress to, six of which would not be included as a positive outcome in the Graduate Outcomes survey.

The panel noted that the progression indicators were based on a low response rate to the Graduate Outcomes survey, and appreciated the argument given by the provider that the graduate outcomes method and timing does not align with NCG graduate programmes. However, the panel considered that limited alternative evidence was given by the provider in their submission to enable the panel to understand how many of the provider's students progress into careers or further study consistently.

Considering all of the evidence, the panel concluded that overall there was insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature. The panel did however acknowledge that the indicator showed outstanding rates of progression for part-time students, and this was taken into account when the panel reached its judgement on the student outcomes aspect rating.

Intended educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission articulates its commitment to preparing students to meet local challenges through a technical and highly vocational curriculum, and sets out the qualities, skills and knowledge the provider intends its learners to achieve.

The provider articulated its educational gains through its educational gains dimensions diagram, which sets out 'what is measured?', 'how?', and 'why?'. It includes social capital outcomes, attributes, technical and vocational knowledge, belief and values and cognitive and behavioural gains. The panel considered the provider is clear about what it wants its students to achieve, through 11 identified skills which have been contextualised to each programme, and the relevance of this to its students.

Overall, the panel concluded there was sufficient evidence that this is an outstanding quality feature.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

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

The provider noted the next stage of the development of its educational gains approach is to capture performance against its dimensions of educational gain. An employability project has identified 11 skills, which have been fed into teaching methods to prepare students for the future.

The panel considered the evidence in the submission related more to the intended gains and how they are embedded in the employability project, and considered the submission to contain limited detail on the support to achieve the gains which is described as being through 'curriculum and wider learning opportunities', and 'the provision of workshops, specialist materials, podcasts, webinars and one to one support' by the careers team.

The uptake of wider learning opportunities was not detailed, including engagement with careers services and resources, although the panel noted there are planned approaches including career readiness surveys and e-portfolios.

Overall, the panel judged this feature to have elements of very high quality, but concluded there was insufficient evidence to consider the feature overall as being of very high quality.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

There was minimal evidence presented by the provider of educational gains evaluation and therefore the panel considered there to be insufficient evidence to judge this feature. This did not impact the panel's judgement on the student outcomes aspect rating, in line with the TEF guidance that a provider will not be prevented from being awarded higher TEF ratings solely based on an absence of developed educational gains measures.

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 'Silver'. The overall rating is therefore also 'Silver', with the panel finding sufficient evidence that the student experience and student outcomes are typically very high quality.

In reaching this decision the panel noted the positive impact that the employer-led curriculum design is having on the student experience at the provider. Additionally, the panel noted the level of tailored support for the provider's mix of students, supported by the provider's student engagement efforts.