



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

Farnborough College of Technology

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Bronze

Typically, the experience students have at Farnborough College of Technology and the outcomes it leads to are high quality, and there are some very high quality features.

Student experience: Bronze

The student academic experience is typically high quality, and there are some very high quality features.

Very high quality features include:

- teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting its students' learning, progression
- physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning
- the provider fosters a supportive learning environment, and its students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support.

Student outcomes: Bronze

Student outcomes are typically high quality, and there are some very high quality features.

Very quality features include:

- very high rates of progression for the provider's students and courses
- very high rates of continuation and completion 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
- 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

University Centre Farnborough is part of Farnborough College of Technology, a general further education college based in north east Hampshire on the borders of Berkshire and Surrey. The main campus is in Farnborough, with a smaller Construction Campus in Aldershot.

The provider's mission is to be a 'Technical Community University, facilitating learners' social mobility, fuelling sustainable industries, and empowering lifelong learning communities'. The vision is to, 'create learners who will be a success for themselves, the economy and society'.

Almost all (96 per cent) higher education students are 'commuter students'. 18 per cent of students achieving full honours degree started with A-levels. The other 82 per cent started with Level 3 Diplomas, or Access to Higher Education qualifications, or in some cases with industry experience but no formal Level 3 qualification.

A third of those completing full honours degrees started by undertaking a Foundation Degree and then moved on to a 'Top-Up' to achieve their full honours degree.

In partnership with employers, the provider has developed a Higher Apprenticeship offer, and has opted to include Higher Apprenticeships in this assessment.

Over the four year assessment period there were 1,600 full-time students and 830 part-time students. In this period 260 students were on higher and degree apprenticeships.

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

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: Bronze

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

The panel determined the student experience to be typically high quality, with some very high quality features.

The panel found that:

- three of the features are very high quality
- there was insufficient evidence of very high quality for four features
- no features of the student experience are clearly below the level of 'very high quality' or of concern.

The panel judged there to be compelling evidence in the provider and student submissions, and the indicators, that the very high quality features apply to most of the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups.

The panel weighed up all the evidence in the indicators and the submissions relating to the student experience aspect as a whole, and determined the student experience aspect rating to be 'Bronze'. This is the panel's assessment of the aspect 'best fits' the description: some features of the aspect are very high quality for most 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 full-time indicator for 'teaching on my course' provides evidence of a very high quality feature.

The provider submission states that 'a significant proportion of our Higher Education delivery is not covered by the National Student Survey (NSS), these include those on HNCs, HNDs, Top Up Degrees, Professional Part Time and Higher Apprentices'. It details an internal survey which includes a broader range of students than NSS and shows that 82 per cent rate the teaching on their course as 'good' or 'excellent', up from 77 per cent the previous year.

The overall full-time 'assessment and feedback' indicator also provides initial evidence of a very high quality feature.

The student submission, while including some positive comments, details some of the challenges of recurring staff absence, and the resulting impact on students' studies. Additionally, students understood that they were on an accelerated degree, but the panel noted that there was an absence of evidence regarding teaching methods and approaches taken into account regarding this.

The panel considered the evidence in the round, and found that the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting its students' learning, progression. They concluded that this is a very high quality feature.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The panel considered there to be not enough evidence of very high quality in relation to this feature.

The provider submission references employer meetings which take place at least twice a year, as well as chartered institutes providing accreditation to programmes. Labour market intelligence is used to develop programmes, and favourable comments from external examiners are presented in the evidence.

The student submission refers to student involvement in revalidation, guest speakers coming into lessons and there being information regarding careers in key sectors.

Overall, the panel found insufficient evidence to detail how 'course content and delivery effectively encourage the provider's students to engage in their learning, and stretch students to develop their knowledge and skills'. Therefore, the panel did not find enough evidence to rate this feature as very high quality.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

The panel considered there to be not enough evidence of very high quality in relation to this feature.

The provider submission gives evidence of the approach taken to promote research, innovation, and professional practices, including:

- a 'Research and Scholarly Activity fund' of £10,000 which takes bids for research funds from members of staff
- three staff development days each year with various training options, including specific training for higher education staff
- a fund available for short courses
- part funding of postgraduate study for members of staff, including MAs and PhDs. Staff can also apply to attend conferences, and other developmental activities.

However, the panel noted that the provider does not give evidence of the impact of any of these examples. Furthermore, the panel could not find evidence in the student submission, beyond references to careers talks, to provide further information in relation to this feature.

Therefore, the panel did not find sufficient evidence of how the activities listed contribute to a very high quality student experience, and therefore, found insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

Staff professional development and academic practice

The panel found insufficient evidence that this feature is of very high quality.

The provider submission includes some evidence, for example:

- the provider ensures all lecturers have a common understanding of the components of a sound lecture
- good use is made of learners' and apprentices' starting points, although there was little detail in the submissions about how this is done
- reference is made to undertaking training on digital platforms
- there is engagement in schemes such as 'Taking Teaching Further'. However, it was unclear of the numbers of the teachers mentioned, how many were working on higher education programmes
- teachers undertake some work in industry, but the panel could not find evidence of how this impacted students and their academic experiences.

The panel did not find any evidence of how practices are promoted, or how the activities stretch beyond normal practices in the sector. Therefore, the panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel considered this to be very high quality.

The panel judged the indicators as a whole to provide evidence of very high quality.

The panel found that the provider's 'higher education progress coach' is having a significant impact on the retention of students and is an effective investment. There are interventions focused on resolving attendance issues, signposting to support services and, through exam boards, students have their experiences discussed holistically.

Additionally, peer mentors, student support, and small class sizes are providing effective and well-signposted support for students. The student submission provided the panel with little further evidence for this feature, however there were some complimentary comments about the nurturing approach teachers have.

The panel reviewed this evidence holistically and concluded that this feature is of very high quality. It concluded that the provider fosters a supportive learning environment, and its students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support.

Learning resources

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

The overall full-time 'learning resources' indicator provides insufficient evidence of very high quality. However, in the most recent year, the panel noted that the data shows improvement. The

provider submission detailed an internal survey showing a 13 per cent improvement in responses to questions regarding learning resources.

The provider submission details substantial capital investments made since 2018. The panel noted that it is unclear as to whether or not these are wholly investments in higher education provision. However, the panel weighed the list of investments made as being significant given the size and context of the provider. The investments, however, are not reflected in the indicators, and the panel found limited evidence on how strategic the investments had been and their impact.

The student submission details an 'HE only' building and describes some issues with non-higher education students using it.

However, the panel concluded that the improving data, the student acknowledgement of higher education spaces and the investments meant that physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning, and that this is a very high quality feature.

Student engagement in improvement

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

The overall full-time 'student voice' indicator provides insufficient evidence of very high quality.

The student submission details that students feel that their voices are heard, and there is praise for the work that the vice principal does in engaging students. The provider submission details a mechanism to gather student feedback in formal and informal ways. This includes reps attending course meetings, and a minuted Student Voice Committee. The panel found evidence of student voice being embedded into formal processes and meetings, and that there are mechanisms for informal feedback. However, the panel's view was that the evidence presented reflects standard practice, rather than compelling evidence of very high quality.

The panel reviewed evidence for how effective the mechanisms are in improving the student feedback and could not find specific examples of how feedback had led to improvement detailed or that there is a clear strategic approach.

Therefore, the panel found insufficient evidence of very high quality in relation to this feature.

Student outcomes: Bronze

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 weighed up all the evidence in the indicators and the submissions and found that student outcomes are typically high quality, with some very high quality features.

The panel found:

- two features are very high quality
- four features have insufficient evidence of very high quality.

Considering the features holistically, the panel judged that some features of the aspect are very high quality for most groups of students.

The considered the best fit rating to be 'Bronze' as 'some features of the aspect are very high quality for most students'. The panel did not have any concerns regarding student outcomes that would have meant a 'Requires Improvement' judgement needed to be considered.

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

Approaches to supporting student success

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

The provider submission details a range of initiatives to support student success. This ranges from a careers bulletin to a careers week, and careers advice and guidance. There are over 20 career talks for the current academic year, and engagement with members of the alumni community. The provider details a range of trips and visits, and this approach is embedded to all courses.

However, the panel found little evidence in relation to how effective these initiatives were in both the provider submission and the student submission. Furthermore, the panel could not find evidence of impact of this work lasting beyond students' studies.

Therefore, the panel judged that there was insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel found evidence of very high quality for part-time students, and insufficient evidence of very high quality for full-time students.

The indicators both give evidence of outstanding quality for part-time students, where for full-time students there is evidence of performance below the level of very high quality. There are smaller numbers of apprenticeships, but the provider performs above benchmark for both continuation and completion.

The provider submission details the appointment of a 'progress coach' in 2021, however the student submission indicates that the role is still be established. Therefore, the panel found limited evidence of impact yet for this initiative.

The panel judged that, balancing the full-time and part-time indicators and the apprenticeship indicators, there is sufficient evidence of very high quality continuation and completion rates.

Progression rates

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

Overall progression rates for full-time students provide evidence of very high quality.

The provider submission details how progression to higher levels of study is built into programmes and how this is considered as part of self-assessment activity. However, the submission provides little evidence of the impact of this.

The submission details initiatives such as an annual careers week, and that every month all higher education students receive a careers bulletin with advice, guidance and opportunities. Final year students attend a meeting with a careers adviser and are offered the opportunity to attend workshops on job applications, preparing for job interviews and for self-employment.

The panel concluded that there were very high rates of progression for students, and that this feature is very high quality.

Intended educational gains

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

The panel found limited evidence of the provider articulating its educational gains. The context of the teach practices and methods relating to accelerated degrees were not widely explored, although the structure of the curriculum was given.

There is some analysis given in the provider and student submissions regarding the performance of students on their degrees. However, the panel did not weight these as they could not determine how they related to specific gains.

The panel reviewed the submissions for an articulation of educational gains the provider intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students. However the panel was unable to find sufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

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

As a consequence of the insufficient evidence of 'intended educational gains' (see above), the panel could not determine that the provider supports the gains. Therefore, the panel found insufficient evidence of very high quality in relation to how gains were evaluated.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered that there was insufficient evidence to conclude that this feature is of very high quality.

Overall: Bronze

The panel considered the overall 'best fit' rating to be 'Bronze'.

The panel considered the student experience aspect rating to be 'Bronze' and the student outcomes aspect rating to be 'Bronze'. The panel weighted these two aspects equally to come to a 'best fit' decision regarding the overall rating for the provider.

In reaching this decision, the panel considered the contextual factors throughout its assessment of all of the evidence based on the size and shape information available. The panel found some student experience and student outcomes features to be of very high quality for most groups of students and courses. They judged that the student experience and students outcomes are typically high quality, and there are some very high quality features.