



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

University of Hertfordshire

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at University of Hertfordshire 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:

- a strategic approach to teaching, feedback, and assessment that effectively supports student learning
- course content and delivery effective in encouraging students to engage in learning
- a supportive learning environment with very high quality academic support
- physical and virtual learning resources that support very high quality teaching and learning.

There are also some outstanding quality features including:

- drawing on staff research and creating opportunities for students to engage in research and with industry, resulting in an outstanding academic experience
- outstanding support for staff development and excellent academic practice that is embedded across the provider
- student engagement is embedded across the provider, offering insight at all levels of decision-making, leading to continuous improvement.

Student outcomes: Silver

Student outcomes are typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- effective supports for students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- very high rates of continuation and completion for students and courses
- very high rates of successful progression for students and courses.

There are also some outstanding quality features including:

- a clearly articulated approach to educational gains including an ambition to transform students' lives through 'employability, global perspectives and skills for life'
- a highly effective and tailored approach to supporting students to achieve educational gains
- evaluation of educational gains which demonstrates that students are achieving them.

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 Hertfordshire states its values as ambition and enterprise, with the aim that its students can 'achieve their full potential and go on to have fulfilling careers and lives, whatever their background'.

The provider submission explains that over 30,000 students from more than 140 countries study across seven schools, with 52 per cent of new UK undergraduate students the first in their family to attend university. TEF data collected over a four year period from 2017-18 to 2020-21 shows:

- a notable number of students from deprived socioeconomic groups (37 per cent) and those eligible for free school meals (28 per cent)
- a considerable group of mature students (aged 21 years and over) (21 per cent) and international students (12 per cent)
- 13 per cent of students have reported disabilities.

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

Looking at all the evidence available the panel found the student experience is typically very high quality, with the provider incorporating effective approaches tailored to its students. The panel considered the context of high numbers of students from underrepresented groups and, in particular, deprived socioeconomic groups.

The panel considered the small numbers of apprenticeship students in the student experience indicator data and therefore gave less weight to this. The panel also noted the relatively small number of part time students and weighted accordingly.

Across the student experience aspect, the panel found:

- most features are very high quality
- three features are outstanding quality
- the very high and outstanding quality features apply to most the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups.

The panel applied the criteria and considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Silver'. This is because most features are at least very high quality across most groups of students and for most courses and subjects.

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

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

The panel found these features to be very high quality.

The indicators show:

- for full-time students there is evidence of very high quality for the 'teaching on my course' indicator; while for part-time students there is evidence of outstanding quality
- for both full-time and part-time students there is evidence of very high quality for the 'assessment and feedback' indicator.

The provider submission also shows evidence of very high quality practices, for example:

- the campus experience has flexibility, choice, and versatile ways to connect with learning
- adopting compassion-focused teaching methods, which support inclusive group work
- experts in business and industry contribute to programme design, and are invited as guest speaker in workshops and lectures

- embedding workplace learning into the curriculum and helping students understand the experiences and needs of people who use professional services
- using a curriculum checklist to make sure teaching materials are inclusive and accessible
- over 5,000 students joined placements in 2021-22 (a 67 per cent increase from 2016-17)
- over 1,500 students and graduates are currently employed by the provider.

The provider states a commitment to effective and tailored assessments, including 55 different assessment types to personalise the process, authentic assessments, and a proactive approach to planning. The student submission highlights that some students lack confidence in understanding what is expected from them and others have raised concerns about fairness of marking (although there was acknowledgment of the provider's efforts to address these concerns).

The panel found the evidence from the provider and student submissions indicates a strategic approach to teaching, feedback, and assessment that effectively supports student learning and engagement (although noting student feedback that a significant number of students have concerns about aspects of the assessment process).

Considering the evidence in the round the panel concluded the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment. It also found that course content and delivery effectively encourage the provider's students to engage in their learning, and stretch students to develop their knowledge and skills.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

The panel found this feature to be of outstanding quality.

The provider submission outlines evidence of:

- a research-informed curriculum
- actively promoting research on teaching methods
- publications in teaching journals to demonstrate the provider's commitment to research
- recognising teaching quality through awards and incorporating compassionate teaching methods
- engagement with industry-based speakers, mentoring by former students, and projects linked with professional partnership and organisations
- a research culture that directly benefits teaching and learning, encouraging students to engage in projects e.g. geography students undertaking glacial research in the Arctic alongside glacier scientists, with their work appearing in peer-reviewed journals.

The panel considered the provider is supporting and enriching students by drawing on staff research and creating opportunities for students to engage in research and with industry, resulting in an outstanding academic experience.

Overall the panel found the provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to an outstanding academic experience for its students.

Staff professional development and academic practice

The panel found this feature to be of outstanding quality.

The provider submission outlines evidence of:

- notable numbers of highly qualified staff, including 73 per cent of staff who are principal fellows – significantly higher than average for the sector
- requiring new academic staff without teaching experience to gain a teaching qualification and fellowship
- offering professional development opportunities at different stages of academic careers, including tailored opportunities in some roles
- peer reviewing of teaching to ensure good quality
- offering resources, guidance, and staff development to improve teaching methods, assessment, and feedback practices
- student technology mentors support staff in using the online learning environment.

Overall the panel found there is outstanding support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The indicator shows initial evidence that ‘academic support’ is very high quality for full-time students and outstanding quality for part-time students.

The provider submission shows evidence of:

- access to an online induction course which helps students understand what they need to do to succeed and how to access course materials, according to student feedback
- providing each student with a named personal tutor responsible for academic progress and welfare needs
- using personalised data to prompt intervention from personal tutors when needed and to provide students with individual insights

- supporting face to face information on literacy skills through its 'SkillUp' module, with increasing views over the last few years.

Feedback from the student submission shows some students were not aware of their personal tutor, while nearly a third felt they had not received support from them. While most disabled students felt the provider respected their adjustments, some students said they had to remind some staff.

The panel considered the evidence in the indicators and the submissions, and found that the provider supports students with transition, skills development, and a universal Personal Tutoring system which includes drawing on data to trigger more targeted support. However, the panel considered evidence that this provision may not be experienced by all groups of students across all courses. Considering the evidence in the round, the panel 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 found this feature to be very high quality.

The indicator shows compelling initial evidence that 'learning resources' are very high quality for full-time students. For part-time students the indicator suggested very high to outstanding quality although the data did not provide certainty.

The provider submission added evidence of very high quality, for example:

- investing £40 million to upgrade existing facilities
- constructing a new Enterprise building and Institute of Sport building, with a further commitment of £80 million for a physics, engineering, and computer science building, along with major reconfigurations of the De Havilland campus and allied health buildings
- two learning resource centres which are accessible 24 hours a day
- offering hybrid learning, with students viewing recorded teaching three million times since 2018
- establishing four new specialist cyber security labs to support computer science teaching.

The student submission suggests that almost a fifth of students disagree that their timetables are efficient, although the panel noted that the provider is taking measures to address this by monitoring timetable metrics and investing in new timetabling technology.

Overall the panel found physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel found this feature to be of outstanding quality.

The indicator shows initial evidence that 'student voice' is outstanding for both full-time and part-time students.

The provider and student submissions add evidence that the student voice has influenced a number of initiatives at the provider, for example:

- implementing a safety net policy, IT equipment provision, remote access to specialist software, and hardship funding during coronavirus
- introducing an online induction course for students ('Getting ready to study at Herts')
- deadline extensions, incorporating more interactive classes, and improvements to the personal tutoring system
- providing more laptops for loan and changing parking arrangements to accommodate commuting students
- implementing a data system to reduce awarding gaps for ethnic minority students.

The student submission highlights that student leaders are supported to embed the student voice across the provider, offering insight at all levels of decision-making.

Taking the provider and student submission evidence into account, alongside the indicator data, the panel concluded that the provider embeds engagement with its students, leading to continuous improvement to the experiences and outcomes of its students.

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. The panel considered the context of high numbers of students from underrepresented groups, and in particular deprived socioeconomic groups.

The panel noted the relatively small number of apprenticeship students in the student outcomes data sets and weighed the evidence accordingly.

Across the student outcomes aspect, the panel found:

- three features are very high quality
- three features are outstanding.

The panel applied the criteria and considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Silver'. This is because most features are at least very high quality across most groups of students and for most courses and subjects.

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

Approaches to supporting student success

The panel considered this a very high quality feature.

The provider submission describes its approaches to supporting students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies. This includes:

- carrying out 250 personalised careers and employment appointments each week
- one-to-one mentoring sessions from the student enterprise team, with 189 student or graduate start ups launched in the past three years
- Assessment Centre Experience sessions for around 2,000 second year undergraduate students
- employability champions based in each School.

The provider submission also provided examples of the impact of its approaches to student support, for example, reductions in awarding gaps between different student groups.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel found the provider takes a strategic approach to effectively supporting its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel considered this a very high quality feature.

The 'continuation' indicators shows:

- evidence of very high rates for full-time students
- insufficient evidence of very high rates for part-time students
- some evidence of outstanding rates for apprentices.

The 'completion' indicator shows:

- evidence of very high rates for full-time students
- insufficient evidence of very high rates for part-time students.

The provider submission recognises that certain groups of students have faced challenges in terms of continuation and completion which the provider has addressed by discontinuing certain courses or making changes to how courses are designed and delivered.

Considering the evidence in the round, and taking into account the relatively small number of part-time students, overall the panel concluded that there are very high rates of continuation and completion for most of the provider's students and courses.

Progression rates

The panel considered this a very high quality feature.

The indicators show evidence that progression rates are very high for both full-time and part-time students (though noting some varied performance across different full-time student groups).

The provider submission highlights actions it is taking to tackle progression rates in some subject areas which fall short of the provider's goals. These actions include conducting a curriculum review and providing targeted additional support like career and placement modules.

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 describes a very comprehensive approach to educational gains, including an ambition to transform students' lives by developing 'employability, global perspectives and skills for life' focusing on three aspects of learning: academic knowledge, motivation and values, and skills and personal development.

Overall, considering the evidence in the round, the panel found 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.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

The panel considered this an outstanding quality feature.

The provider demonstrates its commitment to supporting students' educational gains in various ways evidenced previously in this panel summary. These include:

- a curriculum that is designed and informed by research, industry and the professions, and that incorporates graduate attributes
- providing support for educational progress through the careers and employment service, along with various other programmes, to help students improve their readiness for work and boost their confidence.

Overall the panel felt that the submission evidenced that the provider's approaches to supporting its students to achieve educational gains are evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to its students and their different starting points.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission highlights how it measures and evaluates educational gains. This includes:

- survey data showing 87.4 per cent of Level 6 students describe their skills level as 'good or excellent', while 87.1 per cent say they have 'good or excellent' employability skills. Both scores show a significant increase compared with the start of their course
- figures highlighting consistent improvements in the 'value added' metric for all student groups
- a considerable proportion of students rate their personal development, self-reflection, and values as 'good or excellent' compared to the beginning of their course. These improvements are found across different demographic groups.

The panel considered there to be evidence of a comprehensive approach to evaluating educational gains focusing on evidence of personal development, values and self-reflection on learning. Overall, the panel found the provider evaluates the gains made by its students, and demonstrates its students are succeeding in achieving the intended gains.

Overall: Silver

Based on the guidance and the expert judgement of panel members, the panel found the 'best fit' rating to be 'Silver'.

The panel considered the 'Silver' ratings for both the student experience and student outcomes aspects and gave equal weight to both. It carefully examined the evidence across all features, student groups, subjects, and courses.

The panel considered the provider's context throughout its assessment, including the high proportion of students from underrepresented groups.

The panel found overall that the evidence showed there is typically very high quality provision for most groups of students and courses.