



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

Harper Adams University

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Gold

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

Student experience: Silver

The student academic experience is typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- effective teaching, assessment, and feedback practices that support students' learning, progression, and attainment are embedded across the provider
- 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/or employer engagement contribute to a very high quality academic experience
- learning resources are used effectively to support very high-quality teaching and learning
- student voice practices support students' experiences.

There are also some outstanding quality features including:

- outstanding support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice, which is embedded across the provider
- a supportive learning environment which applies to the mix of students and courses, and evidence that this support is embedded and tailored to students' needs.

Student outcomes: Gold

Student outcomes are typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- highly effective approaches to support student success, which ensure its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- progression rates are outstanding and successful progression for the provider's students and courses are evident
- clear articulation of intended educational gains the provider expects its students' to achieve
- support for students to achieve their intended educational gains
- evaluation of these gains.

There is also one very high quality feature:

- 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

Harper Adams University regards itself as the 'the UK's leading and an internationally recognised small and specialist university for education and research in and across the connections between sustainable food production, animal health and wellbeing, land use and sustainable living environments'. The provider has developed six 'core strands' which are features of all undergraduate courses.

It has around 2,400 students in the academic year 2020-21, almost all undergraduates. There are around 100 postgraduates, including both taught and research students.

Of the full-time, undergraduate students, 72 per cent are studying agriculture, food and related studies; approximately ten per cent are studying veterinary sciences; seven per cent biosciences; and small number (1-3 per cent) studying another six subjects.

Most students are under 21 years old, with almost all of the students being white (less than one per cent of students are recorded in each of the other ethnicities) and female (60 per cent). The majority of students are not local prior to entry.

Around 25 per cent of students are on a sandwich year at any one time, and mandatory placements are discussed in greater detail in the provider submission.

The provider submission explains the relationship with Askham Bryan College and, until 2020, the provider validated provision at Reaseheath College. There is also a partnership with Beijing University of Agriculture. A new Harper and Keele Vet Sciences partnership started in 2021.

The provider was identified as 'world-leading' by the Office for Students specialist provider panel in 2022.

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 <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/data-used-in-tef-2023/>

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

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 weighed up all the evidence in the indicators and the submissions relating to the student experience aspect as a whole and determined its rating to be 'Silver'.

The panel considered and weighed up the evidence to identify outstanding and very high quality features. It found:

- five features to be very high quality
- two features to be outstanding
- the provider embeds effective approaches for its students

The panel judged there to be evidence of typically very high quality across the aspect as a whole, which applied to all of the provider's groups of students.

The panel considered the best fit rating to be 'Silver' because most features are very high quality for all groups of students and courses. The panel did not think that 'Gold' would be the best fit because the evidence demonstrates that 'some' rather than 'most' of the student experience features are of outstanding quality and the outstanding quality features apply to 'most' rather than 'all' 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 'teaching on my course' indicator provides compelling initial evidence of very high quality for full-time students, and that this applies to most of the provider's groups of students. There are variations for some student groups and subjects, but with less certainty in the evidence

The overall indicator for 'assessment and feedback' provides strong evidence of very high quality for full-time students, and that this evidence applies to most of the provider's groups of students. The indicator for part-time students provides less certainty due to the small numbers involved, and therefore the panel placed limited weight on this evidence.

The provider and student submissions supplement the indicator evidence by providing further evidence of a very high-quality feature, including:

- a number of coronavirus pandemic necessities, such as recorded lectures, which have now become standard practice
- changes to assessment with a new default of either timed open book assessments or takeaway e-assessments, and more recorded lectures made available to students as a study aid.

Overall, the panel concluded that effective teaching, assessment, and feedback practices that support students' learning, progression, and attainment are embedded across the provider.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

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

The panel look at the evidence in the provider submission, including:

- evidence of its aim to 'prepare highly motivated, problem-solving graduates with day one competencies and career-focused motivation'
- courses that are designed in partnership with leading employers to ensure relevance
- that 'academic staff routinely visit placement students', used also as a means of gaining employer feedback
- the network of employers which directly and routinely supports learning for field trips
- how employers: act as external speakers; loan specialist equipment to students; provide set design briefs for students; and sponsor major projects.

The provider submission includes evidence that students are stretched to develop their knowledge and skills, but there was a lack of evidence of stretch to their fullest potential. This was interpreted as evidence of very high quality, rather than outstanding.

Weighing up all the evidence, the panel judged overall 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 considered this to be a very high-quality feature

It found evidence of very high quality practices in the submissions, including:

- evidence of degrees that are developed with 'research undertaken as part of all degree courses' in the provider submission, as well as many research examples including 'develop new techniques', solve 'live problems' and 'robotic techniques'
- evidence of how research and employer engagement contribute to the academic experience detailed in the student submission

The panel concluded that there is evidence that the provider uses research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement which contribute to a very high quality academic experience.

Staff professional development and academic practice

The panel considered this to be an outstanding feature.

The provider submission includes evidence of the support for staff professional development 'which attends to different career stages'.

Further examples the panel considered include:

- a well-established professional standards framework scheme
- an annual learning and teaching conference, and quarterly learning and teaching forums
- practitioner-led initiatives and communities of practice
- action research that is shared with other higher education institutions
- the provider has also shared effective methods of teaching entomology and sustainable integrated pest management at the COP26 conference.

Overall, the panel concluded that there is evidence of outstanding support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel considered this to be an outstanding feature.

The overall indicator for 'academic support' provides compelling evidence of outstanding quality for full-time students, and that this evidence applies to most of the provider's groups of students. The indicator for part-time students provides less certainty, but the panel placed limited weight on this evidence due to the small numbers.

The provider and student submissions supplement the indicator evidence by providing further evidence of an outstanding feature, including:

- evidence of tailored support in the provider submission, that recognises and addresses student's differential starting points,
- the development of core academic competencies and confidence through the professional scholarship programme, which is embedded across each undergraduate course
- one-to-one support, with students having access to personalised tutorial sessions, at least once for each module
- winning the Whatuni Student Choice Awards for careers prospects and support.

After considering all the evidence, the panel found that the provider ensures a supportive learning environment which applies to the mix of students and courses, and there is evidence that the learning environment and academic support is embedded and tailored to students' needs.

Learning resources

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

The overall indicator for 'learning resources' provides compelling evidence of very high quality for most of the provider's groups of students. The panel also took into account of evidence of consistent very high quality provision across most of the provider's courses, with the exception of two subject areas.

The provider and student submissions supplement the indicator evidence by providing further evidence of a very high-quality feature, including:

- evidence of specialist facilities required to run degrees, such as pig units, a food research centre and an on-farm teaching hub
- laboratories, a dairy innovation centre, the veterinary education centre, and recent enhancements to library services, demonstrating that the provider invests according to the requirements of students' degree programmes
- investment in new technology and digital infrastructure, with continued use of the virtual learning environment (Moodle).

The panel found that overall, there is evidence that physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high-quality teaching and learning, which apply to the provider's mix of students and courses.

Student engagement in improvement

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

The overall indicator for 'student voice' provides compelling evidence of very high quality for full-time students. There is reasonable consistency across all groups and students, although the indicators suggest less evidence of very high quality for two subject areas, which the panel noted when considering this feature.

The provider and student submissions supplement the indicator evidence by providing further evidence of a very high-quality feature, including:

- evidence of engagement with students through the president and vice-president of the students' union and the student voice co-ordinator
- a termly meeting for student representatives and feedback from forums.

In conclusion, the panel found that the provider effectively engages with students through practices that lead to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students.

Student outcomes: Gold

Throughout this section, we refer to indicators. The indicators for continuation, completion and progression rates are based on national data about higher education students. The indicators are 'benchmarked' to show how well the provider performs for its particular mix of students and courses.

The panel weighed up all the evidence in the indicators and the submissions relating to the student outcomes aspect as a whole and determined its rating to be 'Gold'.

The panel then considered the extent to which there are very high quality and outstanding quality features across the aspect as a whole, and considered how far these features apply across all the provider's student groups and the range of its courses and subjects.

It found:

- five features to be outstanding
- one feature to be very high quality
- evidence of typically outstanding student outcomes across the aspect as a whole.

The panel judged there to be compelling evidence that the very high quality and outstanding features typically apply to all the provider's groups of students. The panel considered the evidence in the provider submission to be important to the panel's assessment of the indicator evidence and features, such as contextual evidence regarding the provider's graduate progression data.

Considering the evidence and the provider context holistically, the panel considered there to be evidence of outstanding provision across all groups of students and courses, and that most features are typically outstanding for all groups of students and courses. The panel therefore judged that the best fit rating is 'Gold'.

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

Approaches to supporting student success

The panel considered this to be an outstanding feature.

The provider submission includes evidence of the practical support for students during the coronavirus pandemic, and the careers service winning consecutive years of the WhatUni student choice awards for career prospects and support.

The panel noted information about a 'strict admissions' policy, and questioned whether this was entirely consistent with the provider's aims as an inclusive university, although the provider submission did not provide further narrative on this.

Further examples from the provider submission include:

- a strategic approach to supporting students into placements and subsequent employment
- narrative to explain the part-time student data.

The provider submission was used by the panel to make a judgement of the provider's approaches to supporting student success. The provider submission includes evidence of how it tailors approaches which apply to the mix of students and courses at the provider.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider has highly effective and tailored approaches to supporting student success, which ensure its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

Continuation and completion rates

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

The overall indicator for 'continuation' provides compelling evidence of very high quality for full-time students, with evidence of almost outstanding quality over the last four years. The panel noted the indicator evidence applies to most of the provider's groups of students, with some variance noted however.

The overall indicator for 'completion' provides strong evidence of very high quality for full-time students, and that this evidence applies to most of the provider's groups of students. The indicators for part-time students showed less evidence of very high quality, across all ages, quintiles and subjects, but the panel took the small cohort numbers into consideration

The provider and student submissions supplement the indicator evidence by providing further evidence of a very high quality feature, including an explanation of how datasets have been affected by partnership provision and smaller cohorts.

The panel judged therefore that, overall, there are very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

Progression rates

The panel considered this to be an outstanding feature.

The overall indicator for 'progression rates' provides compelling of outstanding quality for full-time students, and that this evidence applies to most of the provider's groups of students. It also provides evidence of outstanding quality for part-time students, but limited weight was placed on this due less certainty of the evidence due to the small numbers .

The provider submission supplements the indicator evidence by providing further evidence of an outstanding feature, including:

- how it is ranked fifth nationally for graduate outcomes, based on graduate outcomes 2022 data (for the graduating class on 2019-20)
- that it has 'exceptionally high employment rates and low numbers of students choosing further study within 15 months of graduation'
- evidence of how outstanding rates of progression are maintained.

Overall, the panel concluded that progression rates are outstanding and successful progression for the provider's students and courses are evident.

Intended educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding feature.

It looked at the evidence in the provider submission and found:

- evidence of the provider's current and future ambitions relating to professional esteem

- clearly articulated measures of the educational gain indicators
- a clear explanation for why these educational gains are relevant to its students and their future ambitions.

The provider submission was used by the panel to make a judgement on the intended educational gains feature, and it was judged that the submission clearly articulates why these are relevant to their students and that they apply to the mix of students and courses at the provider.

Weighing all this up, the panel concluded that the provider clearly articulates its intended educational gains, and that this is an outstanding quality feature.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding feature.

It looked at the evidence in the submissions and found:

- a description of ‘the diverse aspirations of students’, all of whom ‘undertake a professional skills module in the context of their own discipline’
- how ‘students track their own progress towards professional competencies’
- that the approaches described to support educational gains are evidence-based and highly effective

The provider submission was used by the panel to make a judgement on the approaches to supporting educational gains. The panel judged there to be sufficient evidence on how educational gains are tailored to its students and their different starting points. Further, evidence of students being supported to achieve educational gains was noted in other features.

In considering the evidence, the panel concluded that the provider’s approaches to supporting its students in achieving their intended educational gains are highly effective and tailored to its students. This is consistent with an outstanding feature. .

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding feature.

The provider submission states, for example, that ‘work readiness, employability skills, and impact of our students as measured by employer feedback through internal surveys of employers’.

A further example includes how, through surveys, employers confirmed the core skills of the graduates. Although the tool was not systematically measuring educational gains, it has been well used to evaluate educational gains.

The provider submission was used by the panel to make a judgement of the approaches to evaluating and demonstrating educational gains. The provider submission includes how its students are succeeding in achieving the intended gains.

In conclusion, the panel judged that the provider evaluates the gains made by its students, and demonstrates its students are succeeding in achieving these gains, which is consistent with an outstanding feature.

Overall: Gold

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

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

In reaching this decision, the panel considered there to be compelling evidence that the outstanding and very high quality features apply to all the provider's groups of students, including students from various subject groups.

The panel found most student experience features to be of very high quality for all groups of students and courses, but with two outstanding features. It found that most student outcomes features are of typically outstanding quality, with one very high quality feature.

Therefore, when determining whether the overall rating should be 'Gold' instead of 'Silver', the panel judged that student experience and student outcomes are typically of outstanding quality for all groups of students and courses.