



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

University of Bristol

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at the University of Bristol 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:

- Very high quality teaching practices that are effective in supporting students' learning, progression, and attainment
- course content and delivery that 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 employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience
- very high quality support for staff professional development, with an excellent framework for academic promotions
- physical and virtual resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning
- effective engagement with students, leading to improvements to their experiences and outcomes.

Student outcomes: Gold

Student outcomes are typically outstanding quality.

Outstanding quality features include:

- tailored approaches that are highly effective in ensuring students succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

There are also some features that combine outstanding and very high quality:

- a mix of very high and outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses
- a clear articulation of the range of educational gains the provider intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to students
- the provider effectively supports students to achieve the intended educational gains.

There is also a very high quality feature:

- the provider evaluates the gains made by its students.

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 Bristol describes itself as a comprehensive, research intensive university with a strong civic mission. It is committed to building students' research skills and supporting students to explore beyond disciplinary boundaries.

The provider serves the South West of England and had around 29,000 students in total in 2020-21, with roughly 21,000 undergraduates. The vast majority study full time.

A wide variety of subjects are offered, with the largest proportions of students studying Engineering (10.6%) and Medicine and Dentistry (8.1%).

The provider explains that, with recent growth, student demography has diversified and that in 2021-22, 76 per cent of students entered from state schools. In addition, 12.7 per cent of students come from the most disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, and 14.4 per cent of students have declared a disability, including 5.7 per cent with mental health conditions.

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 evidence of typically very high quality across the student experience as a whole.

Across the aspect it found:

- five features are very high quality
- one feature where there was not enough evidence of very high quality.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and considered the 'best fit' rating to be 'Silver'. This is because most features of the aspect are very high quality for almost all students, with some outstanding practices noted. This is consistent with a rating of 'Silver'.

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

Teaching, assessment, and feedback

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The indicators for full-time students provided initial evidence that 'teaching on my course' was very high quality, while 'assessment and feedback' was below very high quality.

The provider and student submissions provided further evidence, including:

- the Bristol futures curriculum framework designed to embed educational values in all programmes. Academics, professional services staff, and students collaborated to shape the framework and outline a shared educational vision
- £3.4 million investment in the curriculum enhancement programme to embed curriculum and assessment innovations in partnership with academics, students, and former students
- curriculum festivals and writing retreats to create a coherent curriculum narrative. School education and programme directors undertake leadership development to implement festival outcomes with their teams.

The panel noted that in the area of assessment and feedback, while the provider has a clearly articulated strategy for very high quality practices, the indicators and student submission suggested quality is varied across different subject areas. The provider offered a detailed account of actions to address this, although the impact of these is not yet seen across the indicators.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel judged that the provider has embedded very high quality teaching practices that are effective in supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment. This is consistent with a very high quality feature.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The evidence in the provider submission included:

- the Bristol futures curriculum framework encourages innovation, active learning, inquiry based teaching methods, and student research engagement
- almost half the provider's schools take part in curriculum festivals, fostering research rich education through partnerships with industry, third sector, and community organisations
- students participate in projects that 'make a difference', such as engineering projects with external partners
- study skills support is offered to every student through workshops, tutorials, online sessions, and self paced activities. They are supported by Bristol futures student advocates trained to deliver peer to peer assistance at drop in advice sessions.

The panel considered these points together with narrative evidence from the student submission and the indicators for 'teaching on my course'. Considering all the evidence, the panel concluded that course content and delivery effectively encourages the provider's students to engage in their learning, and stretches students to develop their knowledge and skills.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The evidence in the provider submission included:

- the embedding of research, employer engagement, and industry into the student experience, backed by partnerships with various sectors
- disciplinary research and teaching scholarships inform degree programmes, with 80 per cent of undergraduates taking part in capstone research projects to enhance skills and independent research capabilities
- students contribute to external research activities, co-authoring journal articles and attending conferences
- the provider collaborates with over 6,000 employers, offering opportunities including year in industry placements and industry liaison roles.

Overall, the panel considered the evidence to demonstrate very high quality practice, concluding that the provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for its students. The panel considered that more evidence of the impact and spread of these practices and opportunities for all studenties would be needed to judge the feature as outstanding.

Staff professional development and academic practice

The panel found this feature to be very high quality overall, with some evidence of outstanding practice.

The evidence in the provider submission included:

- the Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching (BILT) shows increased reach and impact on educational innovation.
- investment of £2.4 million in educational enhancement and continuing professional development for academics and graduate teaching assistants, emphasising a culture of teaching excellence
- Bristol teaching awards celebrate excellent teaching annually
- an academic promotions framework highlights the importance of research alongside teaching practice
- there have been over 5,000 attendees at BILT seminars, workshops, and digital design courses, with hundreds of staff attending annual learning and teaching conferences
- the number and quality of teaching focused promotions have increased, with over 100 promotions. All staff seeking promotion must gain a higher education academy fellowship.

The panel noted some outstanding practice, for example in the implementation of the new academic promotions framework. Considering the evidence overall, the panel concluded there is very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel found there was not enough evidence of very high quality for this feature.

The indicator for full-time students provided strong initial evidence that 'academic support' is below very high quality.

The panel noted that for some student groups the indicator was a little further below the level of very high quality, particularly for disabled students. The narrative in the student submission supported paying attention to these students' specific needs.

The provider submission showed evidence of strategic efforts to improve academic support, through a number of interventions and partnerships with students. These include pre arrival support such as tailored assistance for students with protected characteristics; a peer assisted study scheme; expanding wellbeing services, involving staff and students in strategy development; and online study skills support used by a growing number of students.

The panel also noted student feedback showing 82 per cent of students feel comfortable approaching lecturers for help, however there were less positive comments on the consistency and quality of support from personal tutors.

The panel considered that the provider has developed appropriate strategic interventions around the learning environment and academic support, but that the experiences of students are mixed. Therefore the panel judged overall that there was insufficient evidence of a very high quality feature.

Learning resources

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

The indicator for full-time students provided some initial evidence that 'learning resources' are very high quality.

There was evidence in the provider submission that the provider is proactively investing in and improving learning resources across the university, including:

- specialised teaching facilities that foster students' sense of belonging within their subject, including labs, skill suites, earthquake simulation facilities, and theatre halls, among others
- significant investment of over £80 million in projects with the aim of creating exceptional learning environments.

The panel noted there was some variability in students' experiences of learning resources across different subjects. However, the provider explained that it has taken action to emphasise the importance of the digital environment since the coronavirus pandemic, when there was a dip in satisfaction. This included investment in digital tools and hybrid learning spaces.

Considering the evidence overall, the panel concluded that physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning.

Student engagement in improvement

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

The indicator for full-time students provided initial evidence that 'student voice' is very high quality.

The evidence in the provider and student submissions included:

- positive student feedback on partnership efforts and positive changes in the curriculum and the overall student experience, although a number of areas for improvement were also outlined
- students acting as core members of quality assurance activities and taking part in the development and approval of curriculum enhancement
- student participation in strategic educational initiatives like assessment, research rich education, wellbeing, decolonisation, sustainability, and inclusivity
- an education and student experience strategy developed in consultation with students
- appointing student insight roles, which led to the formation of a student advisory group.

The panel noted evidence of very high quality engagement with students but that this engagement is not consistently experienced in all subjects and student groups. However, there was persuasive evidence of strategic improvement in this area.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel judged the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students. This is consistent with a very high quality feature.

Student outcomes: Gold

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

The panel considered that student outcomes are typically outstanding quality. Across the aspect the panel found:

- two features are outstanding
- three features that combine outstanding quality with very high quality
- one very high quality feature.

The panel found that the very high quality and outstanding features apply to all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and considered the best fit rating to be 'Gold'. This is because the evidence best fits the description: 'most features of the aspect are outstanding 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 found this feature to be outstanding.

The evidence in the provider and student submissions included:

- strategic investment in student development, fostering transferable skills and career readiness early on
- graduates contribute to the local economy, with an increasing number of graduates opting to stay local
- the careers service has 50 experts who collaborate with academic staff and help integrate employability into the curriculum. Dedicated employability advisers are also embedded in each faculty

- programmes incorporate the Bristol skills framework into teaching and personal tutoring, helping students reflect on their strengths and improve in areas of weakness
- internal research showing that students admitted on a lower contextual offer perform in line with their peers. The Bristol scholars initiative supports students from city schools who have been in challenging circumstances
- in 2022, 26 per cent of Bristol students achieved first-class honours, 54 per cent a 2:1, and 20 per cent a 2:2
- a mentors program offers career focused mentoring for underrepresented students, assisting 418 students over four years
- more graduates are running their own businesses and the proportion of female start-up founders has increased from 16 per cent to 53 per cent over the assessment period.

Considering the evidence overall, the panel concluded that the provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies. This is consistent with an outstanding quality feature.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel considered this to be an outstanding feature.

The indicators showed that 'continuation' and 'completion' were both outstanding for full-time students, with 97.2 per cent of students continuing their studies and 96.3 per cent successfully completing their course. The continuation indicator for part-time students also showed some evidence of outstanding quality.

The provider submission noted that excellent rates of continuation and completion apply across the protected characteristics and socioeconomic backgrounds of its students. For example, continuation and completion rates for disabled students were outstanding, and outstanding rates also applied across genders, most age groups, and different subjects.

Overall, the panel judged there are outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

Progression rates

The panel found this feature to be a mix of very high and outstanding quality.

The indicator for full-time students provided initial evidence that 'progression' is very high quality. This was consistent across most student and subject groups, with stronger performance for some groups.

The panel noted some areas were below very high quality. However, the provider outlined a range of strategies to address these including targeted and intensive work by its careers service and recent tailored support and opportunities for relevant students.

The panel considered the provider has a convincing strategy for addressing more challenging areas. It found evidence that the provider has developed a strong partnership between academic and professional staff. This includes dedicated employability advisers embedded in each faculty, who support students and academics to integrate careers and skills work in the curriculum.

Looking at the evidence overall, the panel judged there is a mix of very high and outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

Intended educational gains

The panel found this feature to be very high quality with some outstanding elements.

The evidence in the provider submission included:

- adopting Barnett and Coate's framework which focuses on knowing, acting, and being as key educational gains
- its curriculum framework is designed to lead to these gains, which are: 'intellectually stimulating; disciplinary and interdisciplinary, fostering personal development, sense of belonging, and engaging students in global and civic challenges'
- principles of educational gain are echoed throughout the provider's practices including interdisciplinary challenges, civic engagement, innovation and future development.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider clearly articulates the range of educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students. The panel judged the feature to be very high quality with some outstanding characteristics relating to the depth of teaching methods.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

The panel found this was a very high quality feature with some outstanding practices.

The evidence in the provider submission included:

- a university wide approach to enhancing the curriculum, integrating educational gain principles into curriculum design
- tailored support for students from different backgrounds to succeed. This includes:
 - courses such as the gateway course for potential foundation year applicants, and preparing for academic success in the UK for international students
 - the Bristol PLUS award aids career readiness, involving workshops, experience hours, online courses, and reflective accounts. Data shows awardees are more often in graduate work or study
 - the Bristol mentors programme offers career focused mentoring for students from underrepresented backgrounds. It matches students with alumni to help them explore ideas, set goals, and identify opportunities, so they can transition into work.

The panel judged that the provider effectively supports its students to achieve the intended educational gains, consistent with a very high quality feature. However the panel also noted some outstanding practices, including the Bristol mentors programme.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel judged this feature as very high quality.

The panel noted there was limited direct evidence of evaluating students' gains in relation to the provider's articulated principles. However the panel considered that a coherent assessment strategy linked with institution wide curriculum design enables the provider to evaluate students' educational gains.

The panel noted data analysis and research studies are used to understand students' progress and enhance success. This includes the flourishing student research project which deepened understanding of academic and personal development.

National student survey data is also used to understand students' progress against intended educational gains. Additionally, analysis is carried out in relation to certain student groups including Bristol scholars and those accessing the Bristol mentors programme.

Considering the evidence overall, the panel concluded that the provider evaluates the gains made by its students, consistent with a very high quality feature.

Overall: Silver

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

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

In judging 'Silver' to be a better fit than 'Gold', the panel considered all the available evidence to show, on the whole, that the student experience and student outcomes are typically of very high quality, rather than typically outstanding quality.