



# **Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023**

## **Summary TEF 2023 panel statement**

**University of Chester**

# Summary of outcomes

## Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at University of Chester and the outcomes it leads to are very high quality.

### Student experience: Silver

The student academic experience is typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting students' learning, progression, and attainment
- course content and delivery that effectively encourages students to engage in their learning, and stretches them to develop their knowledge and skills
- effective engagement with employers across all subjects, including for work based learning modules and placements
- support for staff professional development with excellent academic practice promoted
- a wide range of tailored academic support, where academic staff effectively work with academic skills advisers to integrate resources
- physical and virtual learning resources that are used effectively to support teaching and learning
- effectively working with students as partners, including strong links with the students' union.

### Student outcomes: Silver

Student outcomes are typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- effectively supporting students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- very high rates of continuation and completion
- very high rates of successful progression
- articulating the range of educational gains intended for students, with a commitment to ensuring students secure careers irrespective of their background
- effectively raising the profile of graduates among employers, allowing students to develop industry links.

# 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.

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 Chester is a small university with campuses located across Birkenhead, Shrewsbury and Warrington town centre. In 2020/21 the university taught 8,170 full-time undergraduate students, along with 380 part-time undergraduates and 420 undergraduate apprenticeship students.

During the TEF period the largest number of full-time students studied nursing and midwifery (15.2 per cent), followed by business and management (12.1 per cent), and psychology (6.8 per cent). Other popular subjects include education and teaching, law, agriculture, and sociology.

Students from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds study at the provider and it has a mix of students entering with BTECs, Access Courses and A-Levels. Data shows that 16.7 per cent of students reported a disability, 15.7 per cent of students are from ethnic minority backgrounds and mature students account for 26.6 per cent of the population.

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

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/](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/](https://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:

- all features are very high quality
- two of the features had with elements of outstanding quality.

The panel found the high quality and outstanding features apply to most of the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups, and its range of courses and subjects.

The panel applied the criteria and found the 'best fit' rating to be 'Silver'. This is because all features of the aspect are of very high quality for most groups of students, consistent with a rating of 'Silver'.

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

### Teaching, assessment, and feedback

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The indicators showed:

- for full-time students there is compelling evidence that 'teaching on my course' is very high quality; while there is very strong evidence 'assessment and feedback' is outstanding
- for part-time students there is initial evidence that 'teaching on my course' is outstanding; while there is initial evidence 'assessment and feedback' is at least very high quality.
- for apprenticeship students there is compelling initial evidence that both 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' are outstanding quality.

The provider submission shows further evidence of very high quality, including:

- effectively supporting students to understand assessment requirements, resulting in positive responses to module evaluations
- higher than average national student survey scores on students receiving helpful comments on their work, supplemented by positive external examiner reports
- grants that support innovations in teaching practice, including tailoring teaching to meet the needs for BTEC entrants and the development of soft skills in science subjects, among others. However, there was a lack of evidence on their impact
- establishing a staff led group to explore best practice in virtual and augmented reality in teaching, although there was a lack of detail on impact.

The panel noted that it did not see sufficient evidence of diverse forms of tailored assessment supporting students' learning, progression, and attainment for different demographics and disciplines to judge this feature as outstanding.

Looking at all the evidence in the round, panel judged the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment.

### **Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch**

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The provider submission showed evidence of a very high quality feature, including:

- National Student Survey and UK Engagement Survey results showing student satisfaction with the learning community and feeling challenged to do their best work
- inspiring course content in English, computer science, and policing, with good levels of engagement.

The panel found there was not enough evidence of an outstanding quality feature due to inconsistencies in TEF subject indicators. This led it to consider the provider's approach to embedding inspiring course content may not be effective across all its subjects and courses.

Looking at the evidence in the round, the panel concluded that course content and delivery effectively encourage the provider's students to engage in their learning, and stretch them to develop their knowledge and skills.

### **Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement**

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The provider submission showed evidence of a very high quality feature, including:

- engaging with employers across all subjects, including over 1,400 employers for work based learning modules and placements
- the university's knowledge exchange framework positively impacts progression, raising business profiles and graduate visibility
- the Philip Barker centre for creative learning brings students and practitioners together across disciplines, though evidence of impact is not clear
- accounting and finance courses align with professional body requirements so students receive the maximum number of exemptions from professional exams after graduating
- the business school's carbon neutral initiative was shortlisted for the 2022 Times higher education business school of the year award
- in partnership with Santander, young enterprise initiatives benefit business students through alumni mentoring.

The panel found examples of very high quality research and innovation, but not enough evidence of an outstanding feature. This was due to a lack of detail around the benefits of its approach across courses and students, and little evidence of impact. However, the panel considered there was very high quality employer engagement that is embedded to benefit all courses.

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

### **Staff professional development and academic practice**

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The provider submission showed evidence of a very high quality feature, including:

- the course management enhancement process ensures ongoing evaluation of student feedback and creates improvement plans in real time. This has resulted in increased satisfaction levels in journalism and improved outcomes for social work
- the provider supports staff development through various initiatives such as students' union led teaching awards and conferences and staff led networks
- research on teaching practices is led by the centre for academic innovation and development, complemented by extremely high rates of staff holding a teaching qualification (95.2 per cent). However, its effectiveness is not confirmed by the TEF indicators.

The panel noted evidence of a very high quality feature, based on the ability for the provider's approach to improve subject performance, and varied channels of sharing best practice. However, it was not judged as an outstanding quality feature due to a lack of evidence of impact.

Looking at the evidence in the round, 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 this feature to be very high quality, with some outstanding elements.

The indicator showed for full-time students there is very strong evidence that 'academic support' is very high quality overall. However, there was some variation across subjects.

The provider submission shows additional evidence, including:

- a wide range of tailored academic support, where academic staff in each school collaborate with academic skills advisers to integrate relevant resources into courses
- academic skills advisers facilitated 1,870 skills sessions and engaging 3,895 full-time students in 2017-18. However, evidence of impact is only available for one year
- the academic skill development team is highly accessible across all campuses and offers a 24/7 online platform

- support for disabled students including early allocation of personal academic tutors to ensure accessibility. However, there is no detail on impact
- supporting students with lower pre entry qualifications, including a pre arrival student site resource
- giving students the chance to avoid academic sanctions through a set of online learning resources. 87.7 per cent of students who used this did not receive further academic sanctions, and it was praised by a chief external examiner for improving students' understanding of academic good practice.

The panel considered this feature very high quality with outstanding elements, including giving students the opportunity to mitigate academic sanctions. It noted a lack of evidence of impact for some initiatives, and some lower areas of subject performance in the indicators, which prevented a rating of an outstanding feature.

Considering all the evidence, the panel judged 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, with some outstanding elements.

The indicators show:

- for full-time students there is compelling initial evidence that 'learning resources' are very high quality
- for part-time students there is initial evidence that 'learning resources' are very high quality
- for apprenticeship students there is compelling initial evidence that 'learning resources' are outstanding quality
- some subject areas and student groups, including disabled students, are below very high quality.

The provider submission showed further evidence, including:

- a learning technology development unit provided workshops during coronavirus, and the provider introduced digital inclusion fund. Survey results in 2021 showed students felt more supported compared to the average
- since coronavirus, tailored interactive learning content includes subject specific examples in dance, health and social care, and police education, among others
- incorporating digital material via the Aula project, which won the WhatUni 2021 Excellence in Digital Innovation award
- tailored support for students including a scheme providing core textbooks for year one, which particularly benefits those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds



- the library carried out a diversity audit of learning resources
- a commitment to building on the quality of learning resources following coronavirus, such as delivering over 350 information literacy research development sessions to over 10,000 students.

The panel considered there are some examples of outstanding practice that ensures learning resources are tailored to students and subjects. However, there is not enough evidence of an outstanding quality feature due to varying performance across student groups and subjects in the indicators.

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

### **Student engagement in improvement**

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The indicators show:

- initial evidence 'student voice' is outstanding quality for full-time students, though the data does not provide certainty
- initial evidence 'student voice' is outstanding quality for part-time students, though the data does not provide certainty
- compelling evidence 'student voice' is outstanding quality for apprenticeship students.

The provider submission also showed evidence of a very high quality feature including:

- an engagement strategy guides the provider to work with students as partners, with the president affirming a strong students' union and university partnership and importance of student voice
- Senior university staff work with students on numerous policies including the safety net policy, and course approval processes; while co creating at school level including law, geography and environment, and education
- efforts to ensure equal student voice across demographics, including distance learners. But the panel noted there is no evidence of impact
- employing student race advocates as part of the race equality challenge group. There is evidence from the indicators to show outstanding levels of satisfaction of Asian and black students.

The panel found evidence of wide ranging approaches to incorporating student voice, including underrepresented groups of students. It also noted improvements through strategic and course level co creation with students. However, the panel found little evidence of impact for some initiatives, varying performance across subjects, and declining satisfaction in the indicators. Therefore the panel considered there was not enough evidence of an outstanding quality feature.

Looking at the evidence in the round the panel concluded the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements 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 considered student outcomes are typically very high quality. Across the aspect it found:

- most features are very high quality
- one very high quality feature, with outstanding elements
- one feature was not given a rating

The panel applied the criteria and considered that the best fit rating is 'Silver'. This is because all features are at least very high quality for most groups of students, consistent with a rating of 'Silver'. The panel considered there was not enough evidence to award a rating of 'Gold', based on varied performance across subjects, and limited evidence of impact for some initiatives.

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 very high quality, with some outstanding elements.

The provider submission showed evidence of a very high quality feature, including:

- incorporating work based learning into vocational and non vocational courses, with high employer engagement
- career readiness survey results show 90 per cent of Level 6 students are determined or working towards career path
- additionally, there have been positive graduate outcomes survey results for three years, while Higher Education Statistics Agency data shows higher numbers of students than the sector average reporting meaningful activity at the provider
- using tailored approaches to help students progress such as in business, marketing, music, and social work
- tailored strategies for underrepresented students such as a workplace experiences scheme to underrepresented students' progression, with an anonymous application process to reduce bias.

The panel considered this is a very high quality feature, with elements of outstanding practice such as tailored support for underrepresented students to succeed. However, the direct impact of some approaches, or how well embedded they are, is not detailed.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel found the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

### **Continuation and completion rates**

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The indicators showed:

- compelling evidence that rates of 'continuation' and 'completion' are very high for full-time students. However, there is varying performance across some students and subjects
- initial evidence that rates of 'continuation' and 'completion' are outstanding for part-time students
- initial evidence that rates of 'continuation' are either very high or outstanding for apprenticeship students, though the data could not provide certainty. There is no data available for 'completion'.

The panel noted an analysis of Education Skills Funding Agency data in 2022 shows that the provider's qualification pass rates exceeded the sector average.

Overall the panel considered this a very high quality feature. It did not judge this an outstanding quality feature as the indicators for full-time undergraduates, who make up the majority of students, are very high quality overall and there is varying performance across some students and subjects.

Considering all the evidence, the panel found there are very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

### **Progression rates**

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The indicator showed:

- for full-time students there is very strong evidence that rates of 'progression' are very high, although there was variation across some subjects
- for part-time students there is probable evidence that rates of 'progression' are very high, although there was variation across some student groups
- no data on 'progression' is available for apprenticeship students.

Looking at the evidence, the panel considered there are very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses, consistent with a very high quality feature.

### **Intended educational gains**

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The provider submission showed evidence of a very high quality feature, including:

- the provider does not articulate a prescriptive set of educational gains, but educational gains are illustrated by the provider's commitment to ensuring its students secure careers irrespective of their background
- there is a strong focus on embedding employability and transferable skills in the curriculum, with work based learning in all courses
- the Chester Difference Award offers a framework for students to organise educational gains by reflecting on experiences, skills, presenting to employers
- offering personalised academic support, and simulated and interdisciplinary learning environments
- initiatives beyond the curriculum to develop meaningful and demonstrable development of social capital, overseen by a dedicated social capital operations group
- the knowledge exchange framework contributes to students' social capital. This is especially relevant to students who are the first in their families to attend university, who make up half of new undergraduates.

The panel considered the feature very high quality. It noted there is insufficient evidence of outstanding quality as the provider does not articulate tailored approaches towards their educational gains to ensure they are 'highly' relevant to its students and their future ambitions.

Considering all the evidence the panel judged the provider articulates the range of educational gains it intends its students to achieve.

### **Approaches to supporting educational gains**

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The provider submission showed evidence of a very high quality feature, including:

- performing well in the most recent knowledge exchange framework exercise, surpassing the benchmark and ranking in the top quintile for business engagement
- efforts to raise the profile of graduates among employers, allowing students to develop industry links
- collaboration between different faculties leading to the establishment of a creative health placement for nursing and midwifery students
- offering music workshops during induction week is highlighted as a means to build student relationships, social capital, and foster a sense of belonging
- the partnership with the Santander network fund provides financially accessible opportunities for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, such as membership of professional associations, networking groups, and attending conferences, among others.

The panel noted that though the provider has no direct measure of effectiveness for the Chester development award there is therefore no way to determine its impact. However, the panel recognised the effectiveness of its approaches towards educational gain could be linked with Higher Education Statistics Agency data showing high numbers of students feel the provider offers meaningful activity and current activity fits with their future plans.

The panel did not consider this an outstanding quality feature given the provider could not demonstrate an evidence-based approach via the Chester development award.

When looking at the evidence together, the panel concluded that the provider effectively supports its students to achieve these gains, consistent with a very high quality feature.

### **Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains**

The panel considered that, though the provider mentioned that they are trialling an approach to evaluating educational gains, there was insufficient evidence that it is evaluating its own educational gains at this time to rate the quality of this feature.

### **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 student experience features to be 'Silver'; and student outcomes features to be 'Silver', and gave equal weight to both. It carefully examined the evidence across all features, student groups, subjects, and courses.

In judging 'Silver' to be the best fit, the panel considered all of the available evidence and found that for both student experience and student outcomes, all features of the aspect are of very high quality for most groups of students. This is consistent with a rating of 'Silver'.