



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

The Markfield Institute of Higher Education

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Bronze

Typically, the experience students have at The Markfield Institute of Higher Education and the outcomes it leads to are high quality, and there are some very high quality features.

Student experience: Bronze

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

Very high quality features include:

- use of research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement which contributes to a very high quality academic experience for students
- a supportive learning environment where students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support
- effective engagement with students leading to improvements to their experiences and outcomes.

There is one outstanding quality feature:

- support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice which is embedded across the provider.

Student outcomes: Bronze

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

Very high quality features include:

- effective support of students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- clear articulation of the range of educational gains the provider intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant.

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 Markfield Institute of Higher Education is a small and highly specialist provider, with 90 undergraduate and postgraduate students per year on average.

Founded in 2000, it describes its focus as the delivery of ‘a range of programmes centred on the study of Islam and Muslims in a number of academic fields, such as Islamic studies, economics and finance, sustainable development, education studies, and chaplaincy and pastoral care’.

Both undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes are validated by Newman University. The provider claims the uniqueness of its education and research stem from a ‘distinctive approach of integrating the richness and high standards of traditional Islamic scholarship with cutting-edge research methods, academic rigour and critical analysis’.

Education is delivered at its main site in Markfield outside Leicester in the East Midlands, and at two satellite venues in London and Birmingham. The submissions do not distinguish between the student experience across the sites.

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: Bronze

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

The panel found the student experience is typically high quality for the provider's mix of students and courses. Across the student experience aspect, the panel found:

- one feature that is outstanding quality
- three features that are very high quality
- three features where there is insufficient evidence of very high quality
- no features that the panel considered to be clearly below the level of very high quality or that may be of concern
- the very high quality and outstanding features apply to all the provider's groups of students.

The panel found that the provider and student submissions were sometimes limited in depth and the scale of evidence provided, which impacted on its assessment of features.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and considered the best fit rating to be 'Bronze'. This is because some, but not most, features are of very high quality for all groups of students and courses.

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

Teaching, assessment, and feedback

The panel considered there to be insufficient evidence of a very high quality feature.

The 'teaching on my course' indicator provides initial evidence of outstanding quality.

The 'assessment and feedback' indicator also provides initial evidence of very high quality or above. However, there is significant variability across the time series, falling below the level of very high quality in year two of the assessment period, and also variability for male students. There is some statistical evidence of at least very high quality 'assessment and feedback' for most but not all students. The panel considered that the indicators provide limited initial evidence of very high quality, taking account of the proportion that the indicators contributed to benchmark. As a result, the panel considered that they provide limited initial evidence of very high quality or above for most students in this feature.

The panel noted that while the provider's submission speaks in general terms and briefly about how students are supported to 'achieve academically, grow in confidence and realise their potential', it does not give examples of the impact. Evidence in the provider submission includes:

- small class sizes of 11 to 15 students enabling staff to attend to the individual needs of students

- a performance summary of various National Student Survey domains between 2017 and 2022.

The panel took the view that while it is possible that small class sizes leads to tailored provision, it is not necessarily the case.

The student submission is brief but complimentary about teaching and assessment. It also voices some concerns around the consistency of feedback on assessments, but mentions that the provider had taken action in response.

Taking the evidence in the round, the panel concluded that there is insufficient evidence that 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 that there was insufficient evidence of a very high quality feature.

Evidence given in the provider's submission includes:

- course design is centred around employability as well as cognitive skills, although no examples are provided
- an assertion that the provider offers an 'intellectually stimulating environment that aims to challenge and stretch students academically'
- a suggestion by the provider that this is linked with 'safe spaces' to discuss difficult topics. However, it does not provide examples or details to demonstrate this claim.

The panel noted that the provider's submission gives little description of course content, teaching methods or the approach to curriculum design. There is no evidence of evaluation or impact on students. The panel therefore concluded that there is insufficient evidence 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.

Evidence in the provider's submission to support this includes:

- a research culture including two annual internal research conferences and an annual students' dissertation conference, to which students are invited for their academic development
- guest speakers across diverse fields from charities and non-governmental organisations, to banking and finance
- staff being expected to be specialists with a 'track record of research'.

The student submission notes the challenge arising from the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown regarding the 'unavailability of placements' but does not detail mitigations by the provider.

The panel considered that research seminars and input from external experts are quite extensive for a small provider but that these largely appears to be extra-curricular, rather than embedded within the curriculum. Although staff seek to underpin their teaching by research, there is no evidence of direct connections to the curriculum or teaching practice.

Overall the panel concluded there is evidence that 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 to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission gives evidence to support this, including:

- staff are required to hold a PhD in their subject area and have a research track record
- staff are expected to undertake a higher education teaching qualification and engage with the Advance Higher Education fellowship scheme
- regular staff training on teaching quality and an internal teaching and learning conference established in 2022
- mechanisms for the peer-review of teaching, supplemented by input from senior academics from 'another UK higher education institute'.

Overall, the panel concluded that the submission provided enough evidence to determine that there is outstanding support for staff professional development and that excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider.

Learning environment and academic support

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

The 'academic support' indicator is evidence at least of very high quality. However, the panel noted that the provider's own contribution to the benchmark for this indicator is high (i.e. the weighted average of the provider's own students' contribution to the sector average used to calculate the benchmark), which it felt reduced the strength of the initial evidence of outstanding quality.

Evidence of very high quality in the provider submission includes:

- data showing increasing student satisfaction in this feature, although it does recognise there was a dip during coronavirus. The provider responded to this feedback by creating a new 'Academic Support Officer', although students rarely use this service
- a range of academic support workshops in addition to tutorial sessions and individual tutor support
- how the provider reviews its learning environment each year via the Academic Board and through its committees.

The student submission praises 'fantastic personal skills' and 'almost familial' levels of support provided.

The panel considered whether this was an outstanding quality feature but there was a lack of reliable indicator data or evidence of impact across the range of the provider's students.

The panel therefore concluded that, overall, the provider fosters a supportive learning environment, and its students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support.

Learning resources

The panel considered there to be insufficient evidence of very high quality.

The 'learning resources' indicator for full-time students provides initial evidence of not very high quality.

Evidence offered by the provider in its submission includes:

- the assertion that learning resources are continually enhanced through ongoing investment
- that campus resources include a library, conference centre and a publishing company, although the impact of these on students is not shown.

The student submission notes that learning resources have been enhanced on the basis of student feedback.

Based on the indicator and submission evidence, the panel concluded there is insufficient evidence provided to demonstrate that physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning.

Student engagement in improvement

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

The 'student voice' indicator full-time students shows outstanding quality. There is some variability across 'time' and for gender where there is compelling evidence of outstanding quality for female students but lower confidence for male students. As above, the high level of self-benchmarking (provider's own contribution to the sector benchmark) significantly reduces the reliability of this as an indicator of outstanding quality.

Evidence in the provider submission includes:

- the creation of the Student Council in 2019 which co-ordinates the student voice
- students meet directly with the rector and senior management team twice a year
- members of the student council sit on the provider's decision making committees.

The panel found that, while overall indicators initially show outstanding quality in student voice, these do not apply to the same degree across the assessment period, or across the providers mix

of students. The panel noted however that the submissions detail some well embedded and meaningful engagement with students.

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

Student outcomes: Bronze

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

The panel found the student outcomes are typically high quality for the provider's mix of students and courses. Across the student outcomes aspect, the panel found:

- two very high quality features
- four features where there is insufficient evidence of very high quality.

In line with the guidance, the panel noted where indicators show evidence that is not very high quality this should not be determinative. In this case, the panel noted that the 'completion' indicator for full-time students is suppressed for data protection reasons (i.e. extremely low numbers of students), as are many of the full-time split indicators. Data for part-time indicators is unavailable.

Given the limitations of the data across the 'completion and continuation rates' and 'progression rates' features, as detailed below, the panel considered the provider and student submission to be potentially important additional evidence in its considerations of these features.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and considered the best fit rating to be 'Bronze'. This is because some, but not most, features are very high quality for most groups of students and courses.

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

Approaches to supporting student success

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

The provider submission gives evidence to support the panel's assessment, including:

- identification of financial support for 'at risk students'. Students are also able to pay their fees by instalments
- a career and employability module offered for the last four years
- the promotion of job opportunities to students
- the provider invites relevant experts to share 'real world experience' with students.

The student submission notes the development of skills such as communication, critical thinking and problem solving.

In summary, the panel considered there to be a range of embedded support for student outcomes but that the submissions do not provide evidence of the impact of specific initiatives.

The panel therefore considered the outstanding academic support described above in the 'learning environment and academic support' feature in the student experience aspect as supporting evidence for this feature, concluding that the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel considered there to be insufficient evidence of a very high quality feature.

The panel judged that, due to the high level of data suppression, the indicators in this case are not sufficient evidence to demonstrate very high or outstanding quality in continuation and completion.

Evidence from the provider's submission includes:

- the outstanding academic support and pastoral support noted above in the 'learning environment and academic support' feature in the student experience aspect
- the claim that the primary reasons for students' non-continuation are changes in personal circumstances rather than a lack of academic support. However, no supporting evidence is provided
- how the size and approachability of staff means they 'spot any early signs of mental health issues.' However, no evidence is provided to demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach.

The student submission describes the exceptional levels of support provided to students.

The panel considered the range of support available and noted the provider's attentiveness to student wellbeing and engagement. However, it recognised the limits of the indicator data available and concluded that there is insufficient evidence of very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

Progression rates

The panel considered there to be insufficient evidence of a very high quality feature.

The 'progression' indicator provides initial evidence of not very high quality. The panel considered that the high level of self-benchmarking reduces the reliability of this evidence for this indicator.

Further evidence given in the provider's submission includes:

- support for graduate outcomes via guest speakers, events and a career planning and employability skills module
- the claim that 'due to its specialised focus, it faces many challenges to expand and support students to progress into highly skilled employment'. However, it does not note

how it attempts to address this challenge beyond the evidence outlined above for the the 'approaches to supporting student success' feature

- how 'many students hold significant positions of responsibility in the community such as faith and community leaders'. However, it provides no evidence for this.

The student submission notes the constraints regarding placements during the coronavirus pandemic. There is no description of mitigations put in place, but the submission indicates they value the development of skills and attributes experienced in their courses.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel concluded that there is insufficient evidence of very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

Intended educational gains

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

The provider defines educational gain in terms of cognitive gain and readiness for employment. The panel noted that in its submission it articulates the benefits of the education provided both for individual students and for the communities they inhabit after graduation. This includes development of 'soft skills'.

The submission also describes measurement of educational gain through feedback and student engagement which it states is embedded in its institutional structure.

Based on this evidence, the panel concluded that the provider articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

The panel considered there to be insufficient evidence of very high quality.

The provider claims that its learning experiences are underpinned by strong research and professional practice. It details how it carries out an alumni survey to note the range of positive contributions and destinations of its students.

However, as noted above in the 'progression rates' feature, the panel considered that there is insufficient evidence that the progression outcomes are achieved consistently and to a very high level of quality.

The panel considered that while the provider demonstrates some reflection on this feature across curriculum, teaching and embedded employability, it does not identify any improvements it has made. The panel therefore concluded there is insufficient evidence that the provider effectively supports its students to achieve the educational gains outlined in its own definition.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered there to be insufficient evidence of a very high quality feature.

The provider submission implies that evaluation and continuous improvement are sought through the Academic Board and processes of annual programme review and course committees. However the panel found that these processes are not outlined in the submission.

The panel also noted that the provider does not clarify the extent to which these address student outcomes. An alumni survey is carried out to track some aspects of educational gain. However, the panel felt that the anecdotal nature of these measures and the generality of their discussion were not sufficient evidence.

The panel noted the guidance which states 'a provider will not be prevented from being awarded higher TEF ratings solely based on an absence of developed educational gain measures.' As a result, it did not give significant weight to this feature in its overall judgment of the aspect.

Overall: Bronze

Applying the guidance and the panel members' expert judgment, the panel considered the overall rating to be 'Bronze'. The panel considered the student experience aspect rating to be 'Bronze' and the student outcomes aspect rating to be 'Bronze'.

The panel weighted these two aspects equally and considered all the evidence across all features and across all the provider's student groups, subjects and courses. The panel considered this contextual factor throughout its assessment of all of the evidence.

The panel noted the guidance that where both aspects are awarded the same rating the overall rating should be the same.