



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

## **Summary TEF 2023 panel statement**

**Northeastern University - London**

# Summary of outcomes

## Overall: Bronze

Typically, the experience students have at Northeastern University - London 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:

- very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting students' learning progression and attainment
- course content and delivery that effectively encourages the provider's students to engage in their learning, and stretches them to develop their knowledge and skills
- 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.

### Student outcomes: Bronze

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

Very high quality features include:

- the provider's articulation of the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students.

There is also an outstanding quality feature:

- outstanding rates of successful progression 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

Northeastern University London is a small university based in London, focusing on the delivery of humanities courses. It aims to provide a 'personalised and experiential education that supports diverse learners, and empowers them for personal and professional success and to make a meaningful impact in the world'.

In 2020-21 the provider had 270 full-time students and 40 part-time students. There are currently 146 apprenticeship students. The most popular subject is Politics, with 25 per cent of full-time undergraduate students studying this, followed by 17.8 per cent studying Law, and 15.6 per cent studying History and Archaeology.

The vast majority of undergraduate students are under 21 years of age. Just over 20 per cent of students have a disability, while 36.8 per cent come from the most disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. The majority of students are not local to the provider prior to entry.

The assessment considered information about the provider's undergraduate courses and students on those courses. This included 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](http://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/](http://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 that the student experience is typically high quality, and there are some very high quality features. Across the aspect the panel found:

- four features are very high quality
- there was not enough evidence to judge three features as very high quality.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and found the 'best fit' rating to be 'Bronze'. This is because the evidence best fits the description: 'some features of the aspect are very high quality for most groups of students'.

In making its judgment on the aspect rating, the panel noted that the indicator evidence was not fully supplemented by further evidence of excellence in the submissions. In line with the guidance, the indicators contributed no more than half of the evidence for the student experience aspect. The panel did consider a 'Silver' rating but concluded that neither of the rating descriptors for Silver were applicable.

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

### Teaching, assessment, and feedback

The panel found this feature is very high quality, with elements of outstanding quality.

The indicators provided initial evidence that, for full-time students, 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' are outstanding.

The evidence in the provider and student submissions included:

- an emphasis on personalised learning, with students applying to study with the provider citing one to one tutorials and small class sizes as motivations. However, the panel placed limited weight on this evidence as it refers to applicants rather than current students
- the student submission highlights that seminars generally support learning and clarity, but there is some variability in students' experiences
- very high quality formative assessments where students can discuss their draft essays and get feedback, although this is not fully embedded in all courses
- external examiners found that only 27 per cent of the provider's courses had an assessment of outstanding quality, and only 31 per cent very high quality in 2021-2022
- internal student surveys show that 84 per cent of students felt intellectually stimulated by their course, and they value formative assessment, small class sizes, and personalised learning.

The panel considered that while the indicators provided initial evidence of outstanding quality, there was not compelling evidence in the submissions of outstanding practices.

Considering the evidence overall, the panel judged that 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 found this feature is very high quality.

The evidence in the provider and student submissions included:

- offering a major/minor curriculum
- an aim to globalise the curriculum and embed sustainability, although the panel noted this is embedded in only 23 per cent of undergraduate courses suggesting limited reach and impact
- London focused modules and study visits are offered. Among others this includes opportunities to handle objects at museums for students studying History of Art
- comments from students that they value the major/minor course structure and allowing students to design their own personal curriculum
- all apprentices engage with bootcamps and blended learning opportunities
- positive scores in the National Student Survey on feeling intellectually stimulated, and comments from external examiners that students are encouraged to develop criticality.

The panel noted a lack of information on engagement and evaluation and therefore judged that there was not enough evidence of outstanding course content that inspires students to actively engage in their learning.

Considering all the evidence, the panel concluded 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. This is consistent with a very high quality feature.

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

The panel considered there was not enough evidence to judge this feature as very high quality.

The evidence in the provider and student submissions included:

- an art history research and professional pathways seminar series, although student engagement was not detailed and so the panel placed limited weight on this evidence
- an example of students acting as researchers supporting an exhibition at the London Metropolitan Archives with life story research, and a brief description of a research culture focusing on combining knowledge from different fields and applying academic knowledge to

real world solutions, which will be introduced to undergraduates in the future. However, the panel judged that this offered limited detail of how research enriches the student experience

- limited evidence that scholarship supports teaching and learning, but no reference to professional practice or employer engagement contributing to students' academic experience.

Overall, the panel concluded there was insufficient evidence that the provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship and/or employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for its students.

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

The panel found there was insufficient evidence to judge this feature as very high quality.

The evidence in the provider and student submissions included:

- students appreciate the provider's intention to seek fellowships for staff to enhance teaching, but the panel considered this more an ambition than evidence it could place weight on
- experience/education sessions for staff to showcase teaching methods, although only half of staff who were surveyed considered these to be outstanding or very high quality support for embedding excellent academic practice
- mechanisms for staff professional development including peer review, course reviews, faculty meetings, and appraisals. However, there were limited examples of their effectiveness
- a teaching and scholarly activity career pathway, although the panel noted that there was limited detail on staff promotions through this route.

Overall, the panel did not find robust evidence of impact in the submissions, and concluded there was insufficient evidence of very high quality support for staff professional development and academic practice.

### **Learning environment and academic support**

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The indicator for full-time students provided compelling initial evidence that 'academic support' is outstanding.

The evidence in the provider and student submissions included:

- students generally report they are happy with their experience of the provider's tutorial offer and emphasise personalised learning
- a new academic advisor scheme accessed by 16 per cent of undergraduate students in the last year

- the student submission notes the provider could do more to ensure the wider student community is aware of the resources and academic support available
- less than half of 'at risk' students who engaged with the provider's support to study offer progressed to the next level of study or graduated. The panel considered this to show limited evidence of the success of this approach
- tailored support for students with mental health conditions, along with personalised approaches to academic support and student wellbeing. The panel considered this an outstanding element.

The panel noted that the 'academic support' indicator provided initial evidence of outstanding quality. However, the panel found limited evidence in the submissions that the provider offers consistently outstanding quality academic support that is tailored to students' needs and ensures a supportive learning environment.

While there are some outstanding elements, the panel judged the feature to be very high quality overall, concluding that the provider fosters a supportive learning environment, and its students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support.

## **Learning resources**

The panel found there was not enough evidence to judge this feature as very high quality.

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

The evidence in the provider and student submissions included:

- students report that they are not satisfied with library resources and while the provider has employed a library officer in response, there is not yet any evidence of impact
- comments in the student submission that law students had only recently gained access to UK law learning resources
- plans for enhancements to learning resources that are not yet delivered, which were noted by the panel as contextual information
- the provider has moved to a new site meaning students have further to travel to access library resources. The provider attributes its low indicator performance to this move, although the panel noted that the indicator showed evidence of below very high quality for a number of years
- the new building is well equipped with learning spaces that are accessible for disabled students, although the impact of these changes has yet to be seen in the indicators.

Considering the evidence overall, the panel concluded there was insufficient evidence 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 feature to be very high quality.

The indicator for full-time students provided compelling initial evidence that 'student voice' is outstanding.

The evidence in the provider and student submissions included:

- there is a student and staff liaison committee, and students have access and input into strategic planning, policy review processes, and curriculum
- the development of student voice cafes, bookable and drop-in office hours, and more meetings with student representatives, although impact and reach were not evidenced
- the student submission highlights that student representatives are encouraged to voice opinions, report that their views are listened to, and students feel able to go directly to lecturers if they have concerns
- engagement with students through various methods, although impact was not clear and there was limited information on enhancements introduced as a result of student feedback
- positive student comments saying they feel comfortable speaking to faculties about improvements, that they are receptive to feedback, and seek to provide support.

Considering the evidence overall, the panel concluded that the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements to their experiences and outcomes. This is consistent with a very high quality feature. The panel did not judge the feature to be outstanding because there did not appear to be an embedded approach to engagement that leads to continuous improvements to the experiences and outcomes of 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 that student outcomes are typically high quality, and there are some very high quality features. Across the aspect the panel found:

- one feature is very high quality
- one feature is outstanding
- there was not enough evidence of very high quality for three features
- the panel did not reach a judgement on one feature.

The panel applied the ratings criteria and considered the best fit rating to be 'Bronze'. This is because the evidence best fits the description: 'some features of the aspect are very high quality for most groups of students'.

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

### **Approaches to supporting student success**

The panel found there was not enough evidence to judge this feature as very high quality.

The panel considered there was limited information in the provider submission about how students are effectively supported to succeed and progress, beyond those outlined in the student experience aspect. The evidence in the provider and student submissions included:

- how both the provider and students link the importance of sports and society choices to academic success and are working to improve the offer, but this is currently in development so the impact is not yet clear
- termly meetings are held to give students feedback on attendance, participation, and performance. The panel noted that there was no evaluation of their effectiveness
- an industry engaged launch initiative that supports students' work readiness, although student engagement or evaluation data was not given.

The panel considered there was evidence of approaches to supporting students to succeed, but limited evidence of how these are tailored to the provider's students, the range of students supported, or their effectiveness.

Considering the evidence overall, the panel concluded there was insufficient evidence that the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

### **Continuation and completion rates**

The panel considered there was not enough evidence to judge this feature as very high quality.

The 'continuation' and 'completion' indicators for full-time students provided initial evidence of a not very high quality feature. The panel noted that there have been slight improvements over time.

The panel found that the provider submission did not identify initiatives or strategies to improve continuation and completion rates. The provider attributes its indicator performance to small student numbers, but the panel did not consider this to be compelling mitigation.

The panel also considered internal data from the provider showing positive rates of continuation for apprenticeships. The panel noted this provided partial evidence in relation to continuation data for groups of students and courses.

Considering the evidence overall, the panel concluded there was insufficient evidence of very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses. Therefore this was not judged to be a very high quality feature.

## **Progression rates**

The panel judged this feature to be outstanding.

The 'progression' indicator for full-time students provided evidence of outstanding quality.

The provider submission highlighted that graduates achieve highly competitive career destinations, including major corporations, the public sector, and the civil service.

Overall, the panel concluded that there are 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.

The provider submission included a chart setting out the provider's approach to educational gains which aligns with its mission. The provider articulates three key educational gains it intends students to achieve, which are to be 'agile across disciplinary boundaries, entrepreneurial and innovative, and networked locally and globally'.

The panel considered that while the provider detailed its approach to supporting students to achieve these gains, in some areas there was a gap between the ambition of the gains and the measures that aim to assess that gain.

The panel found evidence that the provider enrolls all students on a compulsory industry engaged programme, focusing on key professional skills and being ready for the job market. While it was unclear how many students engage with this, the panel noted that it is valued by student representatives who have taken part.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve and why these are relevant to its students. This is consistent with a very high quality feature.

## **Approaches to supporting educational gains**

The panel considered there was not enough evidence to judge this feature as very high quality.

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

- the percentage of students who choose to study a semester in Boston and achieve good degrees
- a correlation between student engagement with experiential networking or research assistance projects, and their continuation, completion, and attainment of good degrees
- evaluation of progression and continuation rates and the number of students from underrepresented groups who attain good degrees.

The panel found that there was limited evidence setting out how the provider effectively supports students to achieve educational gains, with much of the evidence in the submission referring to future practices and approaches that are yet to be delivered. The panel noted that while the provider sets out a description of the offer to students, the panel was unable to judge how effective this support is.

Considering the evidence overall, the panel found there was insufficient evidence that the provider effectively supports its students to achieve educational gains. Therefore the panel did not judge this to be a very high quality feature.

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

The panel found that there was limited evidence on the evaluation and demonstration of educational gains, so the panel did not reach a judgement on this feature. In line with the TEF guidance, this did not affect the aspect rating awarded.

### **Overall: Bronze**

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

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

The panel considered the characteristics of the student body when making its assessment. It found limited evidence of evaluation of the student experience or tailored support for part-time students or apprentices.

The panel judged 'Bronze' to be the best fit rating overall because both the student experience and student outcomes aspects are typically high quality, with some very high quality features.